

THE FIELD CAMPAIGNS OF
ALEXANDER
THE GREAT

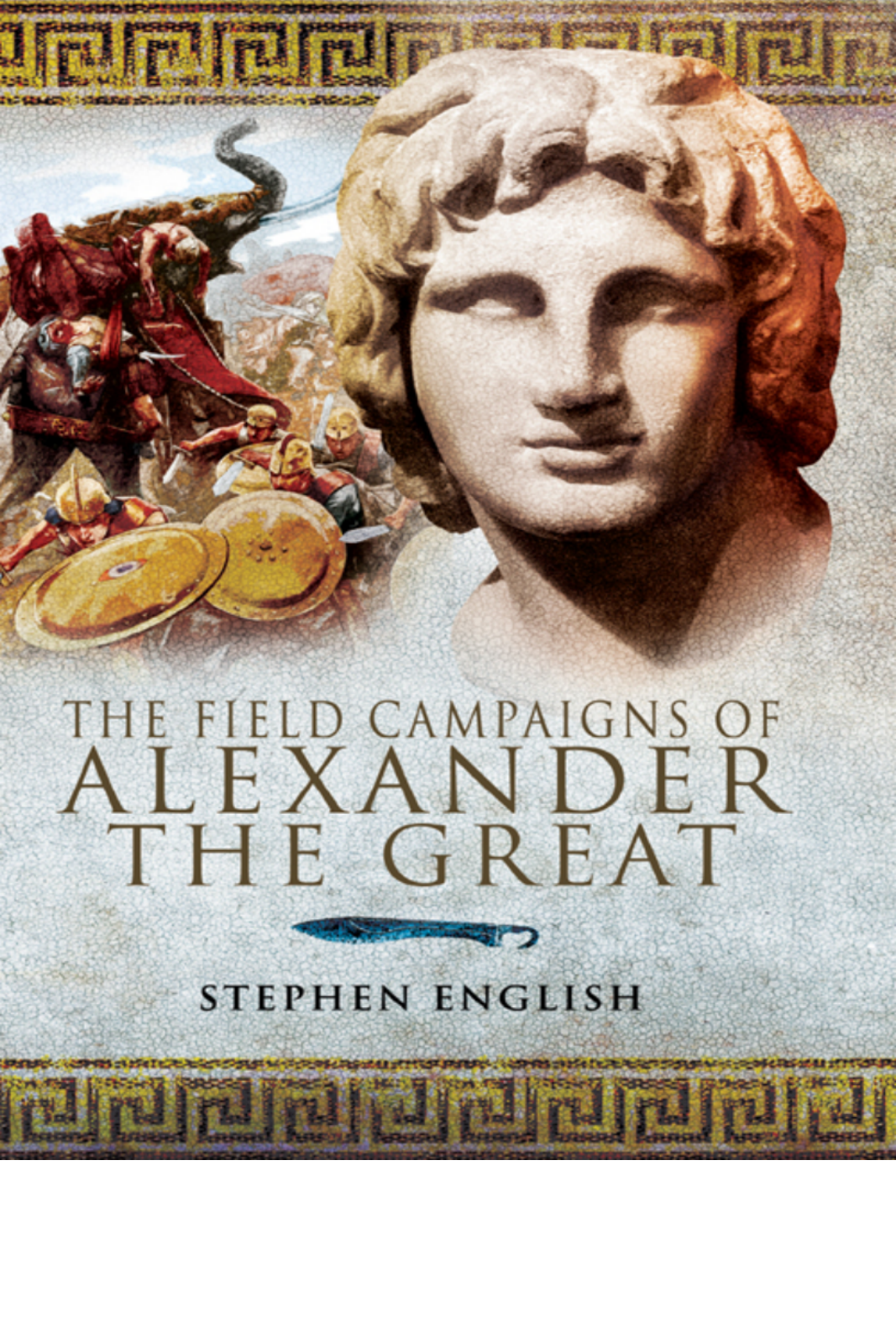
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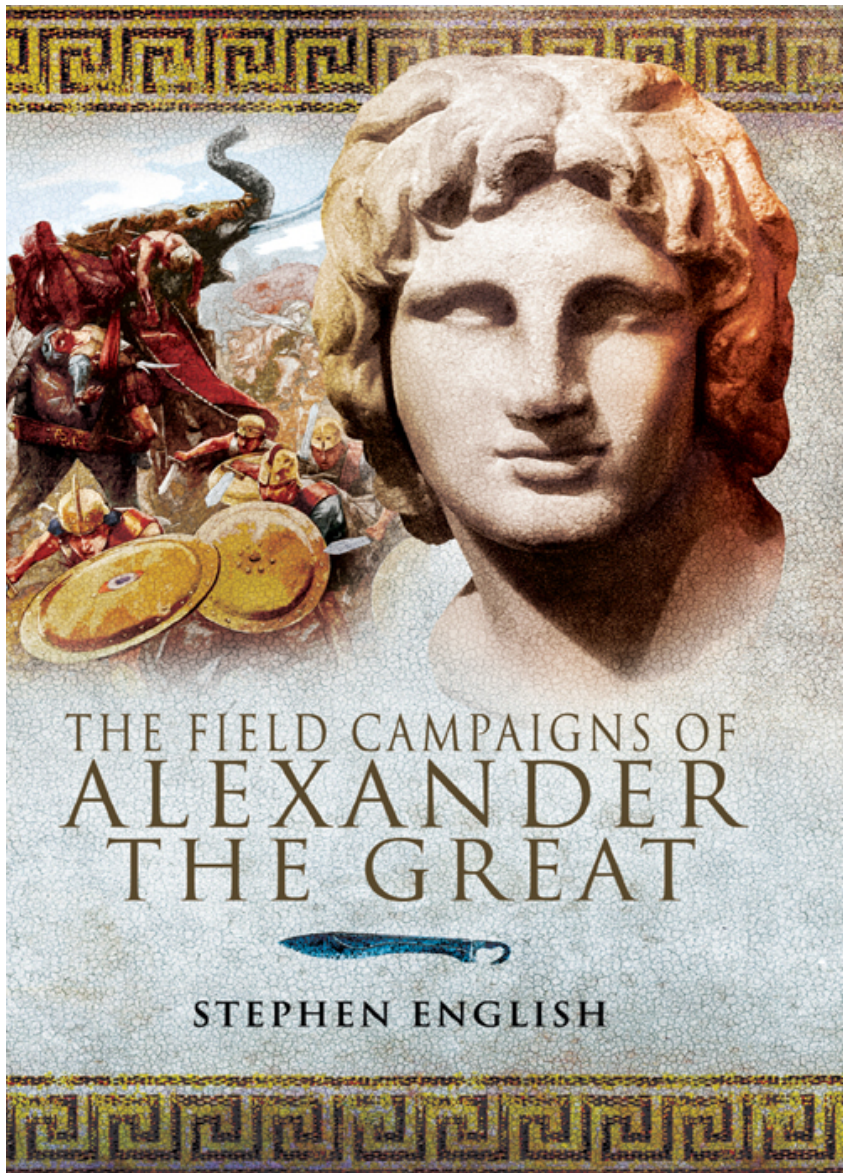
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Contents

Maps

Preface

Acknowledgements

1. Methodology
2. The Balkans, 334
3. The Granicus, 334
4. Asia Minor, 334–3
5. Issus, 333
6. Gaugamela, 331
7. The Northeast Frontier, 330–27
8. India, 327–5

Notes

Bibliography

Index

Maps

1. Northern Greece and the Balkans, Alexander's first campaign.
2. Alexander's route to the Granicus.
3. The Battle of the Granicus River, Phase 1.
4. The Battle of the Granicus River, Phase 2.
5. The Battle of the Granicus River, Phase 3.
6. Alexander's early campaigns.
7. Initial movements up to the Battle of Issus.
8. The Battle of Issus, Phase 1.
9. The Battle of Issus, Phase 2.
10. The Battle of Issus, Phase 3.
11. The Battle of Issus, Phase 4.
12. The Battle of Issus, Phase 5.
13. The Battle of Issus, Phase 6.
14. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 1.
15. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 2:
16. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 3:
17. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 4:
18. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 5:
19. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 6:
20. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 7:
21. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 8:
22. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 9:
23. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 10:
24. Alexander's journey from Gaugamela into the Persian heartland.
25. Alexander's campaign in Bactria and Sogdiana.
26. Alexander's campaign India.
27. The Battle of the Hydaspes River: Initial Movements.
28. The Battle of the Hydaspes River, Phase 1: Initial dispositions.
29. The Battle of the Hydaspes River, Phase 2:
30. The Battle of the Hydaspes River, Phase 3:
31. The Battle of the Hydaspes River, Phase 4:

32. The Battle of the Hydaspes River, Phase 5:

Preface

This book forms the final part of a three-volume set. The organization and equipment of Alexander's army was dealt with in the first volume, *The Army of Alexander the Great*, and the discussions of these issues are not repeated here. As a detailed examination of Alexander's field campaigns, this volume, in combination with the second, *The Sieges of Alexander the Great*, is intended to present a comprehensive narrative of Alexander's military career. These books arose out of my doctoral thesis and have, therefore, been over six years in preparation. I undertook the doctorate, and ultimately these books, with the intention of reconstructing Alexander's battles and sieges with a view to determining what tactics he used in gaining the largest empire the world had yet seen. The whole study, then, has a definite aim: to reconstruct Alexander's great battles and sieges and to assess tactics and their development throughout Alexander's career. This approach may be considered narrow and old-fashioned by some, but I believe much work remains to be done in the area, and that it is still a legitimate field of academic study.

One final note: all dates used within this work are BC, unless otherwise stated, and any errors are, of course, my own.

Acknowledgements

This book is the third that I have written, and there are several key people who I would like to thank for making this and the previous two possible. Elizabeth, for her continued love and support and for making me work, even when I don't want to. Thankyou also to my friends Martin and Sue Foulkes, and my family. I would also like to thank Hans van Wees and Andrej Petrovic for their useful and helpful comments on the doctoral thesis from which this book grew. My greatest thanks, as always, are to Peter Rhodes for continuing friendship and support. I would finally like to thank Phil Sidnell and the rest of the team at Pen and Sword for making this book, and the earlier two, possible.

Finally, I would say that this work owes a great debt to the many scholars who have come before me, and to the body of work that they have produced. I hope that in some small way I can add to that work. Despite the various people who have seen, read, and helped with the production of this book, any remaining errors are entirely my own.

Chapter One

Methodology

My earlier book *The Sieges of Alexander the Great* began with a discussion of the surviving ancient source material for the career of Alexander. For historians, however, the sources are only the first step. The key to history is how we treat that material. This book will open with a development of that material to discuss methodology and how we, as historians, undertake the study of history.

One of the very first issues that any historian, ancient or modern, must address is source analysis. How can we separate the possible (or perhaps inevitable) invention of later historians from the views of the original contemporary source? How can we overcome the bias in any source? How can we reconstruct events from disparate accounts? And of particular interest to us as military historians, how can we reconstruct a battle narrative without the benefit of modern communication? Within this opening chapter I will attempt to answer these questions and essentially set out the methodological approach taken in this book and its predecessors to the sources and to the complex issues of source analysis.¹

The survival of source material makes any study of ancient history difficult, but there are specific issues regarding the Alexander sources that make the study of this period particularly challenging. At first sight, for the career of Alexander, we are blessed with surviving source material. There are two full-length histories of his reign by Arrian and Curtius (although Curtius contains some significant *lacunae*), a biography by Plutarch, two books of Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus, an entire book of Diodorus' history and some significant sections of Strabo; along with these there are some interesting passages in Polybius which are frequently and unjustifiably ignored. This apparent embarrassment of source material is extremely misleading, however, as they are all of late date, the earliest (Diodorus) being late first century BC. Strabo wrote shortly afterwards, in the late Augustan period, and Curtius was probably late first century AD, with Plutarch and Arrian writing some time in the second century. Pompeius Trogus wrote under Augustus; the date of Justin's epitome is disputed but is much later, probably either third or fourth century. The issue of the transmission of accurate information is particularly acute, therefore, in the Alexander historians.²

Despite there being a great number of works written on Alexander during his life and shortly afterwards, no contemporary source survives in anything more than fragmentary form. Of the fragments that remain, most are from a relatively small group of historians, namely: Callisthenes, Aristobulus, Chares, Cleitarchus, Nearchus, Onesicritus, and Ptolemy.³ All of these primary sources present problems: despite their loss, the fact that they were used to such a degree by those sources who do survive means they cast a long shadow indeed over all later scholarship. For most, we do not really know the main thrust of these primary sources: some may have concentrated on military matters, on geography, on natural history, or on the king's character, etc.; we simply do not know with any certainty. We can, however, reasonably speculate that Ptolemy, for example, would have taken care to present his own role as critical to the success of the entire campaign, but even this is speculation given the lack of surviving material. Further to the abundant yet limited source material, there are very few surviving inscriptions and numismatic evidence is sparse, but there are a few references in contemporary orators like Demosthenes.⁴

Of the now lost primary contemporary sources, the first to be written was perhaps Anaximenes' work *On Alexander*, written during Alexander's lifetime. The surviving fragments of this work are far too sparse to support any conclusion as to its aim, tone or quality. Along with Anaximenes was Callisthenes' *Deeds of Alexander* which covered the period down to late 331 at least (the latest datable fragments describe the battle of Gaugamela in that year) and was only cut short by the author's killing in 327 by Alexander. Alexander's death brought a wealth of material written by senior commanders. Onesicritus and Nearchus wrote soon after the king's death, and Ptolemy wrote before 283 (the date of his own death) but probably fairly close to it. Aristobulus composed his history at some point after the battle of Ipsus in 301, contemporary with Cleitarchus' work, which was the most widely read on the subject in the ancient world.⁵

There were also many pamphlets published on Alexander after his death, including a treatise on the deaths of Alexander and Hephaestion by Ehippus and the works of a more formal reporting nature like the *stathmoi* of the Royal surveyors and the *Ephemerides*, which was allegedly compiled by Eumenes. These primary sources provided a rich and wide-ranging pool from which the surviving tradition was able to draw. Modern historians have always felt a tremendous temptation to trace their effect upon the extant tradition by using the surviving fragments. The method has been to analyse the surviving fragments and attempt to trace bias and other characteristics whilst simultaneously trying to identify these in the surviving tradition.⁶ The approach can be very enlightening when we have some other verifiable evidence that a particular fragmentary historian was used by a secondary source, as is the case with Arrian for example, but when the identification is speculative then it often leaves more questions than answers.

The major problem with this approach to Alexander historiography is that we have very little opportunity to examine a large section of any primary source against the available secondary tradition. One of the rare instances where we can do this is with Nearchus' account of his voyage from India to Susa, which forms the narrative base for the second half of Arrian's *Indica*.⁷ To act as a control sample, we also have large sections of Strabo where Nearchus was also the primary source. A similar exercise can be conducted with Aristobulus, although less successfully as we do not have as much surviving material from him to work with. More often than not, this approach is very difficult due to the lack of surviving material, and the tangential material often preserved.

Many secondary authors were very selective in citing their sources and only tend to do so either when they are in disagreement or when the validity of what they are quoting was in question and they are seeking to try to remove any blame from themselves for inaccurate information. As a result of this, when sources are named, it is usually where they were likely incorrect; material that was sober and informative would simply be copied without citation or comment.

Callisthenes demonstrates the above point very well: we may reasonably expect the first historian of Alexander to have been very widely used by secondary historians, but there are only around twelve citations of his *Deeds of Alexander*. Many of the surviving references are only loosely linked with the narrative that we can assume he would have provided (as the official court historian); the largest group are regarding the mythology of Asia Minor, as reported by Strabo.⁸ Of the remainder of the surviving fragmentary material of Callisthenes, there are two longer sections preserved by Polybius which are crucial and concern Callisthenes' narrative of the battle of Issus. Polybius uses the first section, citing his source in order to prove (in his eyes at least) the incompetence of Callisthenes as an historian. The two sections primarily deal with troop numbers and the inaccuracy of the description of the topography of the plain.⁹ There are undoubted problems with Callisthenes' account: the eulogistic approach to Alexander is not helpful (and one of the reasons he does not survive). The secondary sources are far from perfect in their approach to the primary material as Polybius demonstrates here. Polybius tends to assume that all of Alexander's infantry were *pezhetairoi* and that they were as rigid and inflexible as the Macedonian phalanx had become in his own day. Despite the failings of Callisthenes (albeit hardly proved by Polybius), Polybius' detailed criticisms have proved the basis for a number of reconstructions of the site of the battle of Issus.¹⁰

The second of the two major fragments concerns Alexander's visit to Siwah, and is used by Strabo. The sections where Callisthenes is used are highlighted by Strabo to demonstrate that Callisthenes was an archflatterer. Strabo was not here attempting to give a full narrative from Callisthenes,

merely to use him to provide a flattering view of Alexander (having ravens act as guides to help him find the oasis, for example). The implicit criticism of Callisthenes for providing an unashamedly flattering picture of Alexander is echoed by Plutarch, who also related the story of the ravens, although this time without citation.¹¹ Strabo's narrative of the Siwah episode culminates in the statement that Alexander was indeed the son of Zeus, a theme no doubt also coming from Callisthenes' work.

This section of Callisthenes was widely cited and used to demonstrate the belief that he was little more than a flatterer of Alexander. Several other fragments also appear to show this theme (unsurprising in a historian who was writing under the watchful eye of the king himself). Plutarch notes Alexander's prayer to Zeus in similar flattering terms.¹²

Polybius' criticisms of Callisthenes show that he preserved some very detailed material that would have been especially useful to the military historian. There is some good detail on troop numbers and movements which, coming as it did from an eye witness, has a high likelihood of being accurate and correct. This potentially useful material is not what we have citations for, however; he is frequently only quoted in the context of the eulogistic and bizarre.¹³ Having said this, simply because we do not have a citation in a particular passage does not mean that he was not the ultimate source (an argument that can be applied to any primary source who is cited); absence of evidence is not evidence of absence after all. We should be wary, however, of attributing too much material to Callisthenes, as its attribution is almost always speculative and based upon assumptions. Whilst Callisthenes may not have been the most widely read of the contemporary Alexander historians, he certainly influenced the early tradition.

The source problems are even more acute with Cleitarchus. It appears that Cleitarchus was a very popular historian, especially during the Roman period, and was probably the most popular of the primary historians of Alexander. In total, Jacoby accepts thirty-six fragments as being authentic; unfortunately all of them deal with minor and trivial matters. These fragments are mostly preserved by Aelian and deal with the fauna of India, and by Strabo who criticizes Cleitarchus for errors in his geographical and topographical descriptions of Asia, again illustrating that citations are frequently used in order to discredit an historian and remove blame for errors from the secondary source. Of the remaining fragments, "Demetrius focuses on his stylistic impropriety (F 14), Curtius Rufus on exaggeration and invention (F 24–5), Cicero on rhetorical mendacity (F 34). The general impression conveyed by the fragments alone is therefore far from favourable".¹⁴ These fragments, considered in isolation, tend to suggest that Cleitarchus was prone to exaggeration and therefore not a reliable source; if this is correct then it has a significant effect on Alexander scholarship as he was so widely read. We must remember three vital points, however; the first is that, as far as we know, Cleitarchus was not an eye witness to the events

he describes and we must, therefore, consider who his ultimate source may have been. In all likelihood he had several primary sources himself. Probably Callisthenes, Onesicritus and Nearchus were major providers of information for Cleitarchus, as were the large number of Macedonian veterans in Alexandria at the time of his writing. Secondly we do not have enough surviving material to be able to condemn Cleitarchus absolutely: the fragments may well be unrepresentative. The final point follows from that: as noted above, primary sources are only usually cited in order to discredit them and make the secondary author seem more plausible and authoritative. This tendency would lead directly to only negative material being preserved and therefore a conclusion based upon this material is dangerous. Following this, however, we can say that there was evidently a fair amount of negative and sensationalist material in Cleitarchus; otherwise later historians would have used a different primary source in order to prove the point they wished to make.

The general impression conveyed by fragmentary material may well be accurate, but it is unlikely to tell the whole story. If, for example, we were to have citations in Athenaeus and Plutarch's *On the Malice of Herodotus*, we would come to the same conclusion about the father of history as some do of Cleitarchus (and Callisthenes); that his history was filled with malice, trivialities and bias. It would certainly be true to say that such things exist within Herodotus, but not that it is the main thrust of his work.

In order to make a proper judgement of Cleitarchus, more data is required. Modern source analysis has convincingly established that large sections of both Diodorus and Curtius are so similar that the only realistic conclusion is that they derived from the same primary source. The same material is also detectable in both Justin and the extant sections of the *Metz Epitome*. A common tradition has long been recognized and the term 'vulgate', albeit unsatisfactory because of its negative assumption, has been applied to this tradition.¹⁵ It would be entirely incorrect to conclude, however, that a historian from the vulgate tradition never used a primary source from outside of that tradition, e.g. Ptolemy or Aristobulus. Plutarch, for example, frequently used sources that are clearly different from the vulgate and therefore cannot always be considered to be part of that tradition.

The term vulgate does not imply a single primary source, but rather suggests a shared tradition.¹⁶ Having said this, however, that shared tradition probably had a single stronger voice than the rest, namely Cleitarchus. The key passage in indicating this is Curtius 9.8.15, which refers to Cleitarchus as his source for the number of Indians killed during the Sambus campaign:¹⁷

According to Cleitarchus, 80,000 Indians were slaughtered in this area and many captives auctioned off as slaves.

The passage of Curtius/Cleitarchus is clearly the source of the equivalent

Next he ravaged the kingdom of Sambus. He enslaved the population of most of the cities and, after destroying the cities, killed more than eight thousand of the natives. He inflicted a similar disaster upon the tribe of the Brahmins, as they are called; the survivors came supplicating him with branches in their hands, and punishing the most guilty he forgave the rest. King Sambus fled with thirty elephants into the country beyond the Indus and escaped.

The two accounts probably come from the same source, and Curtius tells us explicitly that that source is Cleitarchus (although interestingly again citing his source when the information being given seems unbelievable: 80,000 Indian dead). Whilst this does not prove that the rest of the shared tradition of the vulgate also originates with Cleitarchus, it is a strong indication that at least some of it does. This is supported by what we know of Diodorus, that he generally used a single source for several chapters and only switched sources when he came to the end of his current primary source's work.¹⁹ For Diodorus' Book Seventeen, there are no real digressions, no discussion of the history of Persia or the west, and no discussions on geography or natural history. This further indicates that Diodorus was using a single source for Book Seventeen, as digressions would likely have come from another source, and therefore the idea of Cleitarchus being the primary source for the vulgate is further strengthened.

Arrian's history has generally and rightly been regarded as the finest of the surviving narratives of the career of Alexander the Great. His text is unique in the ancient world in that he specifically gives us information about his use of sources: in his Preface, he identifies both his sources and his reasons for using them as his primary material. Arrian's reasons for selecting his sources are often considered naïve, and I believe this is a perfectly correct judgment, but we must first examine his reasoning in more depth.

Arrian opens his history by telling us that:²⁰

Wherever Ptolemy and Aristobulus in their histories of Alexander, the son of Philip, have given the same account, I have followed it on the assumption of its accuracy; where their facts differ I have chosen what I feel to be the more probable and interesting.

This statement could be taken to imply that Ptolemy and Aristobulus were considered to be of equal weight by Arrian; this is demonstrably not the case, however.²¹ At 6.2.4, Arrian calls Ptolemy “my principal source”; and for Arrian, therefore, there was evidently a clear hierarchy of quality with regard to his sources: Ptolemy, Aristobulus, and then the rest. Ptolemy is clearly Arrian's main narrative source, and some passages are probably verbatim extracts, such as the narrative of the Danubian campaign. Whilst we can

clearly see Ptolemy in the text of Arrian, Aristobulus' contribution is more difficult to assess due to the relative lack of direct citations in Arrian.²²

Whilst Ptolemy and Aristobulus were Arrian's primary sources, confirmed by repeated citations of their work, Arrian also used Nearchus extensively from book six onwards: there is also geographical material taken from Eratosthenes. In Arrian's follow-up work to his *Anabasis*, the *Indika*, he is no less coy in citing his sources; in the latter work he explicitly cites Eratosthenes, Megasthenes and Nearchus.²³ In terms of the quality of sources chosen, Arrian was wise indeed. Ptolemy, Nearchus and Aristobulus were all eye witnesses to the events they described and the first two were leading figures within the command structure of the army.

The quality of the primary source material used by Arrian and others is of fundamental importance to modern historians; the major part of what we have to work with is the literary material that survives from the ancient world, but can it be trusted? Arrian has long been thought of as the most reliable of the surviving sources, as noted above. This is because he used sources that were present at all of the major events that he covers in his work. Even on occasions where Ptolemy, for example, may have been away on some secondary expedition, his other sources probably were not. Upon his return, Ptolemy, as a senior commander, would also no doubt have been briefed as to events that occurred during his absence from camp in what surely must have been regular meetings of the senior staff. We have evidence of such meetings in the numerous councils of war that took place before every major battle of Alexander's career (with the exception of the Hydaspes), and we can assume that plans were discussed in some detail at these meetings, ensuring that all commanders were kept informed of events on the campaign, even those outside of their immediate sphere of influence. Arrian tells us that before Gaugamela:²⁴

Past the crest of the ridge, just as he was beginning the descent, Alexander had his first sight of the enemy, about four miles away. He gave the order to halt, and sent for his officers – his personal staff, generals, squadron commanders, and officers of the allied and mercenary contingents – to consult upon the plan of action.

We can clearly see from the text of Arrian that even rather minor figures within the command structure were present, *ilarchs* and commanders of the allied and mercenary contingents, for example.

This information transfer is of fundamental importance to the surviving material that we have. It means that those secondary sources that used individuals like Ptolemy, Aristobulus and Nearchus who were eye witnesses and present at senior meetings should carry considerable weight with us. I would go as far as to say that our general disposition should be to accept what they say, except where there is an evident aberration (as with the Persian troop numbers at Gaugamela where Arrian notes 40,000 cavalry and

1,000,000 infantry), or where we can demonstrate that another source provides superior information.

It is difficult, and fundamentally foolish, for an historian to make a *carte blanche* claim that any given historian is always right and another always wrong; but there are some generalizations that we can make. With regard to topography we can reasonably assume that those who were present, or who were using a source that was present, are more likely to preserve the most accurate information. My general stance, therefore, is to believe Arrian where there is a discrepancy with the vulgate, and where his account is credible. I do not completely reject the latter tradition, however, as there are no doubt times when Arrian is not correct and the vulgate topography fits better with the surviving narratives.

With regard to troop numbers, Whatley argued that we have three main options:²⁵

To this list I believe that we can add a fourth option: in certain circumstances, we can argue for numbers based upon the known available terrain; e.g. at Issus, where the plain is of a specific size. My general approach is to reject option one as the sources frequently give us very different troop numbers (this option would be available, although still inadvisable, for periods where we only have one source). Option two is a strong theme throughout this book and its predecessors, both in terms of numbers and tactical reconstructions. At the Granicus, for example, I think the most militarily probable theory, based upon what we know of Alexander's tactics elsewhere, and the fact that we have two completely different accounts, is that both are correct and need to be reconciled into a single coherent theory, as I have tried to do. Option three is possible on occasions, particularly with regard to the *pezhetairoi*. We know there were 1500 men per *taxis*, so if three *taxeis* are mentioned we can reasonably assume that 4500 heavy infantry were present. This argument hardly ever works for the Persian order of battle as we have less general knowledge of the command structure. My own option four is applicable in some instances: for example, the only reason we know there were 3000 hypaspists is that their three *taxeis* take up the same frontage as two *taxeis* of *pezhetairoi*, who we know with some certainty comprised 1500 men each.

We can also say that sources who provide a more detailed analysis based upon primary eye witness testimony are also more likely to be accurate and trustworthy than those who are more cursory and rely on poorer quality primary sources. These are arguments essentially for placing a fair degree of trust in Arrian, but all historians, both modern and ancient, are prone to bias; it is inevitable and a fact of human nature. As historians, we must be constantly aware of this tendency which frequently manifests itself in literary invention of later writers. An example of this can be seen in the attitudes to Parmenio. Parmenio, along with his son Philotas, was executed on the orders

of Alexander, an act whose origins probably lay in Alexander's growing isolation and mistrust of those around him, particularly those who were not his contemporaries.

Parmenio is sometimes presented as the wise old general acting as a foil to the youthful exuberance of Alexander, but more often, particularly by Arrian, as being overly cautious and lacking the same heroic vision as the king. There are five instances in Arrian where Alexander considers (however briefly) and then rejects the advice of Parmenio.²⁶ The first is a dialogue that occurred at the Granicus: what ensued is only reported in Arrian and Plutarch; a debate between Alexander and Parmenio as to the best course of action.²⁷ Parmenio apparently advised waiting until the morning; he believed the Persians, who were greatly inferior in infantry, would withdraw and the Macedonians could get across the river unopposed the following morning. He also, apparently, emphasized the difficulties of the terrain. Both sources have Parmenio's advice being rejected out of hand by Alexander.

This is part of a much used, and often discussed, device of (particularly) Arrian to have the overly cautious Parmenio's advice rejected by the bold and heroic Alexander. Diodorus has no such debate, but his account of the battle is as if the advice were acted upon. We must note, as argued below, that Ptolemy was fighting in roughly the same area as Alexander, the right wing, and so Ptolemy was probably also glorifying his own role in the battle, as well as that of the king, and not simply criticizing Parmenio. He may also simply have had less knowledge of events on the left, and have chosen to concentrate on events that he was directly involved in. At the Granicus, Callisthenes was Arrian's source for at least the debate with Parmenio.²⁸ Callisthenes is known to have been hostile to Parmenio and is probably the source for all five of the dialogues between Alexander and the old general that show him as being overly cautious, set against Alexander's youthful heroism.

Before the siege of Halicarnassus began in earnest, we have another debate between Parmenio and Alexander as to the wisdom of offering a naval battle. This is significantly different from the other such debates: here Alexander is portrayed as the pragmatic and cautious party, in opposition to Parmenio's rash and impetuous suggestion. It is perhaps unwise to pass judgment on Parmenio at this point as we have no indication as to exactly what plan he proposed, although I expect that it would have been more sophisticated than simply a battle between all available naval forces.²⁹

At Gaugamela, Parmenio is treated favourably by Diodorus, a fact which presents a number of problems. This treatment decreases the likelihood that he was influenced by the negative sentiment in Callisthenes. It has been argued that the prominent role taken by the Thessalian cavalry in both Diodorus and Plutarch suggests a commonality of sources. I think it more likely that, in the absence of specific passages that are obviously from the

same source, their prominent role in both was simply a reflection of actual events; that is to say that they in fact did have a significant role in the battle. This commonality of sources has been seen as a reflection of the pan-Hellenic nature of Callisthenes' work; but the prominent role of Parmenio, and not just of the Thessalians, calls this into question. The incident of the call for help by Parmenio, some time after Alexander began the pursuit of Darius (or as I believe when he was initially returning from it), is also interesting. Again, it shows no malice towards Parmenio at all, but simply presents a picture of the Thessalians in genuine difficulty asking for assistance. Diodorus, in common with Arrian, simply presents Alexander's response without comment, unlike Plutarch and Curtius who note Alexander's frustration. Interestingly, along with Diodorus' attributing no blame to Parmenio for this incident, he also attributes no blame to Alexander. Diodorus' account is far less useful than Curtius or Arrian, but surely deserves more than to be called "childish and worthless" by one modern authority.³⁰

Reconstructing the Battle

In order to reconstruct an ancient battle properly we must first analyse the quality of our source material and ask how did ancient writers, even eye witnesses to any given event, know what was happening across the entire battlefield? Firstly, we can plausibly assume that an eye witness participant in a battle would have a reasonable degree of knowledge of what was occurring in his sector of the battle, particularly if he was a commander such as Ptolemy. Whether he would have had great knowledge of the rest of the battlefield is another question entirely. Greece and Persia were areas in the ancient world (and indeed the modern world) where precipitation was sparse, and the ground was generally dusty. One can only imagine the amount of dust that would have been thrown up by tens of thousands of men and horses marching toward, and then ultimately engaging in, battle.³¹ This dust, sometimes over a frontage of several miles, would have led to considerable confusion on the battlefield and likely would have made it very difficult indeed for a commander to guide the situation as it evolved once battle commenced. The main exception to this was the battle of the Hydaspes, which was fought during the rainy season in India when dust would not have been an issue. Coupled with this lack of visibility would have been the overwhelming noise of the clash of arms and the cries of the wounded once battle commenced: it would have been all but impossible for a commander's voice to be heard from any distance. Signals could have been used on occasion, but where visibility was particularly poor, a system of runners would have been employed to pass messages and to ensure that Alexander (and other senior commanders) could keep track of the situation. We have an

example of this at Gaugamela where a messenger was sent to Alexander by Parmenio to ask for assistance.

Given these difficulties, coupled of course with the lack of any modern communication devices, how could Ptolemy have known what was occurring in other sectors of the battle, and how can we rely on eye witness testimony if it was by necessity of circumstance limited? I believe that information regarding the battle as a whole would have been disseminated in a number of ways. Before the battle was ever fought, probably the night before (or maybe earlier), a council of war would generally have been held (the probable exception being the Hydaspes). In this council, the battle plan would have been laid out before all of the senior commanders. Details would have been discussed as to what was expected in each sector, the role each unit was expected to perform and what the anticipated Persian response would be. Alexander would have discussed with his commanders what he expected the Persian dispositions to be, and what the Macedonian response would be if the Persians chose an unexpected formation. Discussions would have occurred as to the best tactics for winning the battle, how the Persians were to be lured out of their anticipated defensive dispositions, etc. The commanders would also have discussed how they expected the battle to progress, and where they were aiming the breakthrough to occur, essentially planning for how victory was to be achieved. These would have been discussions, not lectures, but we should be in no doubt that Alexander would have been the leading voice and the controlling mind. Following this council, the commanders would have reported back to the units under their command what was expected of them. It is likely that many commanders may not have provided their subordinates with a full picture of the coming battle, because they didn't need it, just their own sector.

Some of our eye witnesses would have been present at these councils and we can, I think, reasonably assume that their testimony as to what occurred in the opening phases of a battle is reliable: Alexander's movement to his right before Gaugamela, for example. The Persian response would also have been visible, as they were always stationary when Alexander arrived and would therefore not have been shrouded in dust. It is also true that most of the Persian movements (up to any general assault) at all of the first three set-piece battles would have been visible, and therefore likely to have been accurately recorded. The difficulty of observation and therefore accurate recording of information only really arises once the main battle was joined.

Once battle was joined, observation was limited. This is the source of the two separate accounts we have of the Granicus; Ptolemy described the battle that he participated in and had little direct knowledge of the dry land battle of Diodorus.³² We must remember in this regard that Ptolemy was a fairly junior figure at the Granicus and probably not invited to the council of war held before that battle. Ptolemy's commander evidently did not feed back to him anything on the second column that crossed the river at night. Ptolemy

was also no doubt glorifying his own place on the battle by only describing his sector; he probably hoped this would distract the reader from the knowledge that he was a rather junior commander in 334. In later narratives, Ptolemy would have felt no such compulsion as he was of a senior rank and did not have to hide his previously lowly position.

Once the clash of arms had begun it would have been far more difficult for any eye witness to have observed, and therefore later transmitted, accurate information. This process of transmission would have occurred in a number of ways. It seems to me likely that, following the principle of a council of war before a battle, a similar meeting would have occurred afterwards. This would have been to discuss the battle, tactics that had worked, where those that were less successful would need to be modified in the future, the performance of individual units and sub-commanders, along with an analysis of the Persian forces along similar lines. This would have been along similar lines to modern management 'close-out' or 'lessons learned' meetings following a project. We have no direct evidence of such meetings occurring, but I think it likely. We also have no real evidence of many meetings between Alexander and his senior commanders, but again, using the inherent probability argument, it is hard to conceive that such meetings did not happen on a regular basis. These meetings would have been invaluable in the transmission of information regarding what had occurred in each sector to all of the senior commanders, and the likes of Ptolemy would have gained a reasonable amount of their information from such meetings. The fact that his account of the Granicus focuses only upon his own sector, whilst all of his other battle narratives on the whole battlefield, supports this view, as he was a minor figure at the Granicus (as noted above) and therefore would not have been present at the post-battle meeting.

During the battle a measure of information would have been transferred to and from commanders to each other and the king by runners. These would have been messengers charged with carrying information across the confused battlefield. This would have included information on what was occurring in neighbouring sectors of the battlefield to the commander in question. This information transfer would have been vital to coordinate attacks against the Persians, and to modify a defensive posture when a Persian attack was larger than expected such as the Persian attack against the Macedonian right flank guard at Gaugamela. It would not have been possible in a council of war to say exactly when or where a breakthrough would have been achieved, merely where it was anticipated. These runners would have carried the news of a breakthrough to all the relevant parties enabling a coherent battle plan to be maintained (and indeed modified as required). These men would have probably been on horseback and were a human equivalent to radios on a modern battlefield. These men are known at Gaugamela when Parmenio sent a, much debated, message to Alexander asking for help. This is one of the few times such men are mentioned, but

this is not at all surprising as they were generally background figures only mentioned when they are of vital importance to the narrative, as they were at Gaugamela.³³

General Approach

It is not always possible to separate later literary invention from what was recorded as eye witness testimony by the likes of Ptolemy, Aristobulus and Callisthenes, nor is it always possible to identify bias; but by judiciously studying the material that survives, and closely comparing the various accounts, as I have tried to do in reconstructing Alexander's battle narratives, I believe that it is possible to still reach a core of reliable testimony.

It may seem logical that the reconstruction of a battle narrative should come only after the core of factual events has been established; but I do not believe this should always be the case. Some core events can only be established as the battle narrative develops: in this case, the principle of inherent military probability is a powerful one. This concept was first suggested by Burne in his work on the Agincourt campaign, but I think it is relevant and applicable to all periods of history, and is certainly becoming more widely used.³⁴ Essentially this principle states that, when attempting to reconstruct an ancient battle, we should try and put ourselves in the position of the commander, albeit briefly, and consider the most likely action. This will be partly based upon the tactics demonstrated in other encounters, and bears great fruit with the career of Alexander as he was such a successful recycler of tactics and strategies. By using this principle we can reasonably speculate that Arrian, for example, may be correct in some elements of his narrative, Curtius in others, etc. This principle should be used as a last resort when other, more academically rigorous methods have failed, as we have two separate and incompatible pictures of events, or with points of fine detail. We should recognize, however, that history is very far from an exact science and we can ultimately do no better than make our best efforts in any ancient reconstruction.

An example of the application of the principle of inherent military probability is during the siege of Gaza, where Plutarch states that a bird became entangled in the cords of a torsion catapult. Curtius' account, on the other hand, has a rather different theme: he claims that the bird landed on the nearest siege tower and that its wings became stuck to the surface, a surface that had been smeared with pitch and sulphur.³⁵ There is certainly a measure of later literary invention occurring here, as both are good 'tales' and one might expect this kind of story in Plutarch and Curtius. These stories should not be so easily dismissed, however: we do know that Alexander possessed torsion catapults by this time, and that strings of sinew provided the propulsive force; the invention probably lies in the fact that a bird could

become entangled within them given what we know of the design of such torsion engines. Therefore, even when invention can be identified (assuming at least a measure of invention in this case), a measure of fact can be gleaned. The more interesting text, however, is that of Curtius. A siege tower being smeared in pitch and sulphur initially makes no sense and one might reasonably assume a mistake or invention and dismiss the account out of hand; this would be wrong, however. The question must be asked why a siege tower would be smeared with pitch and sulphur. These chemicals were highly flammable and not at all what we would expect to coat the surface of a siege engine of any kind. Instead of dismissing the account without discussion, however, we should first examine if it could have a basis in fact. There is an historical precedent for the use of these chemicals by the Spartans at Plataea during the siege of that city in 429.³⁶ The fact that the Spartans also used a circumvallation, just like Alexander at Gaza, suggests that instead of invention or error, Alexander was probably using the earlier siege as something of a model for the current operation. Taken together with Thucydides' description of the use of fire at Delium 424/3,³⁷ we can demonstrate, I think, by using the principle of inherent military probability that Alexander was trying to repeat an historically successful tactic, rather than the sources making a mistake or inventing material in order to provide a more lurid account.

I have tried to argue that the first phases of most ancient battles have been reliably recorded and transmitted to us (albeit with some inevitable errors and discrepancies); the main problem arises once the 'fog of war' has descended upon the battlefield. This essentially happens when both sides clash and an individual combatant loses his ability to see across the whole battlefield. A core of reliable material can still, I believe, be recovered via the post-battle councils that I suggested, as well as through general discussions and gossip of the participants. It is true to say, however, that the narratives of the opening stages of the battle are probably more reliable. This can be supported by the fact that the clash-of-arms part of a battle is often very briefly described in our sources; frequently the battle narrative jumps from Alexander (usually) being hard pressed and in the thick of the action to breaking decisively through the Persian lines. The lack of detail is generally because the sources had less information to impart. At the Granicus, for example, in one sentence of Arrian Alexander is fighting in the river bed, in almost the next sentence he is on dry land and in the process of winning the battle. The fact that the narratives of these later stages of battle frequently focus on Alexander is because the primary sources were not, by that time in the battle, relying upon their own eyes, but on later accounts that would have contained a certain amount of bias and error.

We have, in many ways, a far greater difficulty with regard to the Persians; our primary sources obviously did not have access to Darius' councils of war, or to any of the other Persian sources of information (with

the exception of Gaugamela, where we have a lot of material, probably ultimately gleaned from their battle plans recovered after the Persian defeat). This is one of the reasons why our sources focus on the Macedonians and they could only speculate upon Persian tactics based upon their dispositions and initial movements, both of which could have been easily observed. From Darius' initial attack against the Macedonian right at Gaugamela, for example, we can reasonably judge that his tactic was to prevent the Macedonians gaining the foothills which would obviate his chariots and great superiority in heavy cavalry.

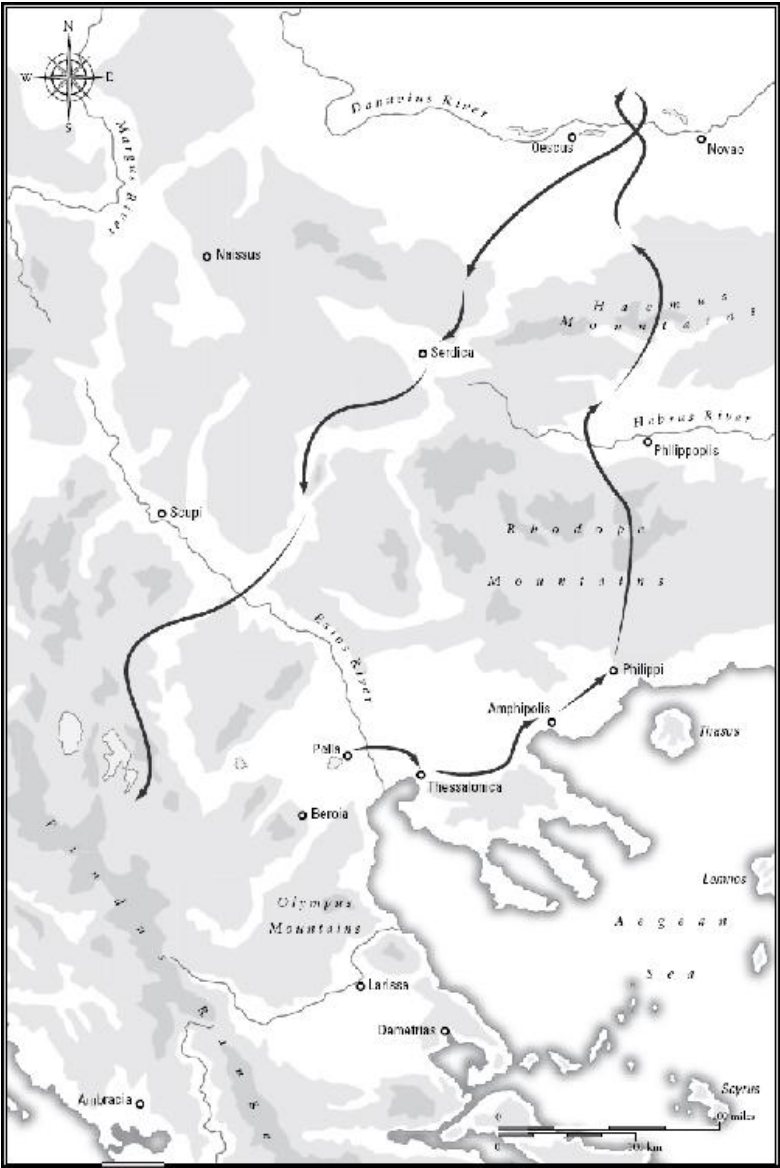
Chapter Two

Campaign in Europe, 335–4

Alexander's early campaign in Europe, before he set off upon his war of conquest against the might of the Persian Empire, offers us some fascinating insights into the evolution of a number of key tactics that were to be developed into what can be considered hallmarks in later campaigns. This early campaign is only recorded in any depth by Arrian (with the exception of the turning of the Vale of Tempe as described below); Strabo and Diodorus offer little of use that can be added and Curtius' narrative does not survive.³⁸ Arrian's source for this whole section is not difficult to establish; he makes one explicit reference to Ptolemy, and it is likely that he used Ptolemy for the whole campaign. The account of the embassies from the Celts and others in Arrian, also deriving from Ptolemy, is very similar to that in Strabo; that Ptolemy is the ultimate source is key, as he was an eye witness to the events he described.³⁹

Philip of Macedon had been assassinated by Pausanias when Pythodelus was archon at Athens; that is to say in the summer of 336. After a series of dynastic intrigues and upheavals, Alexander was declared the new king by the Macedonian army assembly. Along with the rumblings of unrest amongst Macedonia's northern neighbours, the death of Philip also brought with it considerable unrest amongst the always reluctant allies of southern Greece. It appears that Alexander delayed in Macedonia for several months in order to secure his throne and gain a tighter grip on the army before he set off for the southern Greek states in the winter of 336 to subdue the restless natives. For most of the southern Greeks the threat of the presence of a large Macedonian army was enough to bring them into line and most of the campaign was, therefore, bloodless and without any incident worthy of note. The only clash of arms occurred at the very outset of the campaign as the Thessalians attempted to block Alexander's passage through the Vale of Tempe. This was the very strategy that the allied Greeks had considered, attempted to implement and then rejected during the Persian Wars before settling on Thermopylae as a more solid defensive position. The reason that the Vale of Tempe was rejected in 480 during the invasion of Xerxes was that it could easily be turned as there were two smaller passes through the mountains that significant numbers of men could quickly pass through in order to outflank any defensive position in the pass. This is the very tactic that Alexander chose; he marched along the coastal path, cutting steps into

Mount Ossa in order to move his force beyond the pass before turning back to attack the defenders from front and rear. The encounter was brief and successful for the young king. This is exactly the tactic, attacking in multiple directions simultaneously, that Alexander used repeatedly throughout his career and it was used here for the first time.



1. Northern Greece and the Balkans, Alexander's first campaign.

From the perspective of the Thessalians, one wonders why they attempted such a strategy as defending an easily turnable pass. Being natives of the region they would certainly have known about the other passes, and that a

defensive position was untenable. It also seems odd that they evidently only attempted to defend one of the passes. The question as to why they chose a defensive position at all must remain unanswered; their strength was in cavalry and not infantry. We may have expected them to either choose a set-piece battle, or more likely to employ hit and run tactics to wear the Macedonians down without offering them the chance of a decisive victory. After this rapid initial victory, along with a show of strength further south, Alexander returned to Macedonia in the early spring of 335 as *hegemon* of the League of Corinth with effectively more powers than Philip had had before him.

Shortly after returning to Macedonia, and still without much of a military reputation, Alexander began his Balkan campaign. Further to the difficulties amongst the southern Greeks, Philip's death had brought similar unrest on Macedonia's northern borders, and it would have been immediately apparent to Alexander that he could not embark on a Persian expedition until his homeland was secure, both from the south and the north.⁴⁰ The initial part of this campaign was against the Triballians and the Illyrians. The Triballians apparently occupied the plain to the south of the Danube, in what was to become the Roman province of Moesia; they probably also extended some way to the east in the direction of the Black Sea. The Illyrians are a little more difficult to locate; those to the northwest of Macedonia did not revolt until the end of the Danubian campaign, nor were they the *Autariatae*, the peoples to the west of the Triballians, as Alexander apparently was not even aware of their existence until 335.⁴¹ The term *Triballi* is probably used by Arrian in a general sense to refer to those tribes living to the northwest of Macedonia; thus it is a little misleading to speak of the rebelling Illyrians as they were not actually all in revolt at the outset of the campaign. Both the terminology and chronology of the Balkan campaign have become confused in Arrian. The Illyrian and Triballian campaign is, therefore, that which Alexander actually achieved, but it is not what he initially set out to achieve.

Mt. Haemus

The initial target of Alexander's Balkan campaign was the territory of the "free Thracians". It is likely that he first of all set off east from Pella, turning north at Amphipolis and marching past Philippi, probably the less famous of the two cities to bear that name, also passing Mt. Orbelus on his left as is explicitly stated by Arrian. From there it was a leisurely ten-day march to the Haemus range. The length of march is one of the numerous indicators that I will note throughout this chapter that shows that this was by no means a whirlwind campaign. It is around 115km from Philippi to the Haemus range; ten days is a remarkably slow rate of march given the pace that the Macedonian army was capable of, and which Alexander was so famous for;

the reasons for this will become apparent below. It is far from certain which pass in the Haemus range the Thracians had chosen to occupy. Assuming that Alexander marched through (or past) Philippi and not through Philippopolis, then the closest pass to Alexander's route would have been the Trojan Pass, and this does seem to have been the more frequently used in antiquity.⁴² The fact that Alexander took rather longer than we would expect in reaching the pass may be an indication that they had in fact occupied the Shipka Pass, some 16–18km east of the Trojan Pass. Strategically we must ask why the Thracians would choose to defend the Shipka Pass (assuming this is indeed the one they defended) and not the Trojan, or indeed why did they not choose to defend both? The Thracian tribes were probably small and ill equipped; they were almost certainly not numerous enough to attempt a defence of both passes simultaneously against a numerically far greater force: this is supported by the implication from Arrian that there were in reality very few Thracians opposing Alexander in the pass. The Thracians also no doubt chose the Shipka Pass because it was more defensible, being narrower and therefore more easily defended by fewer men. The Shipka Pass was also at a much higher altitude (2437m as opposed to 1051m for the Trojan Pass) further adding to its defensible characteristics. The Trojan Pass was certainly wider: it was the more frequented in antiquity for a very good reason.⁴³

The incident in the pass was, in reality, an extremely minor affair but is worthy of discussion because of Alexander's response to a unique problem. The Thracians had gathered in the pass with the intention of using their wagons as a defensive palisade, with the back-up plan of sending them crashing down upon the advancing Macedonians.⁴⁴ There is an obvious logical problem with the Thracian defensive tactic: if the wagons were sent down the pass against the advancing Macedonians, they would not be available for the defence of the pass, and similarly if they were manned for defence, by the time the Macedonians were close enough for hand-to-hand combat the opportunity to use them as projectiles would be lost; they would have to employ one tactic or the other, not both.

It is possible that the Thracians were manning the wagons in an attempt to trick the Macedonians into advancing up the pass, before launching them as projectiles.⁴⁵ This is entirely possible, but to an extent irrelevant. Alexander almost certainly would have attacked the pass even if he knew what was in the mind of the Thracians, and Arrian does indeed imply exactly that: that Alexander had guessed what the Thracians' intentions were, and given his ordered countermeasures to his troops. Alexander ordered his heavy infantry, probably the hypaspists who were about to advance up the pass, to break formation and press as tightly as they could against the walls of the pass to allow the wagons to pass safely between them. This is exactly the tactic that again proves so successful at Gaugamela against Darius' scythed chariots. The narrowness of the pass, however, meant that this tactic alone would not

be sufficient; the troops who could not get out of the way were ordered to lie prone on the ground and to hold their shields in front and over their heads forming a sort of ramp for the wagons to pass over.

Arrian leaves us in no doubt that the wagons were used as projectiles, but exactly how is far less clear. He constantly refers to them in the plural: is this intended to mean that several were sent down simultaneously, side by side as it were, or should it be taken to mean one after the other? The presumed narrowness of the pass would tend to preclude the former, and therefore we should accept that several wagons were sent down the slope one after the other. If the wagons were released down the slope, and there is no real reason to doubt this, then they must have been manned. If they had not been then they would have veered off course and straight into the walls of the pass long before they reached the advancing Macedonians, even if the drive mechanism had been fixed in place.⁴⁶ None of our sources mentions any drivers, but it must have been the case that some brave souls were steering the wagons as they careered down the slope, a role that they would have known before they started would have meant their certain death at the hands of the Macedonians as soon as the wagons were stopped.

Alexander's countermeasure worked perfectly; so well in fact that Arrian tells us there were no casualties amongst the Macedonians. We can only imagine at how many broken bones there would have been amongst those lying prone on the ground. The Macedonian reply was not simply a mindless charge up the pass, however. Alexander first ordered the archers to take up a position in front of the infantry in case the Thracians should try and follow up the wagon attack with a more concerted infantry assault. With this protective screen in place, Alexander gathered together the Agrianians and some of the hypaspists for a final assault. There must have been considerable confusion after the wagon attack as it seems that the process of forming his final assault party took some time as the archers apparently did manage to repulse more than one desperate assault by the Thracians: according to Arrian "the archers checked the Thracian attacks" before the assault team was fully prepared. When they were ready they "plucked up their courage, raised a cheer, and charged".⁴⁷ At this point, the Thracians had no chance; perhaps 1,500 were killed and very few taken captive, partly because the Macedonians do not seem interested in captives during this encounter, and partly because the surviving defenders could easily melt away into the surrounding countryside that they knew so much better than the Macedonians.

Alexander's countermeasures are, of course, the most interesting part of this encounter. Arrian tells us that he instructed those of his troops who were able to break ranks and allow the wagons to pass through, and where space prevented this they were to lie prone and cover their bodies with interlocking shields.⁴⁸ It is difficult to imagine how these Macedonian troops could have been lying prone and still have held their shields in an interlocking position,

particularly given their shields were only around 61cm in diameter as opposed to a traditional hoplite shield that could span 100cm. Either Arrian is wrong or this is an example of a situation where the heavy infantry were equipped as regular hoplites. They would certainly not have been using the sarissa in a narrow pass such as this, and if regular hoplite spears were used, it is not impossible to believe that, in such circumstances as these, hoplite shields would also be commandeered from the mercenary and allied troops who almost certainly were equipped as the traditional heavy infantry.

The baggage train of the free Thracians, no doubt along with a number of nearby villages and towns, were ravaged and the booty that resulted was immediately sent back to the coastal towns of Macedonia to be immediately spent. Alexander had inherited an almost bankrupt state, and his own preparations had left him with almost nothing; any boost to the state coffers was sorely needed.

After what was probably a pause of a couple of days to ravage the local population, Alexander completed his crossing of the Haemus range and continued his march north, entering the territory of the Triballians and soon arrived at the Lyginus river, three days march from the Danube. The River Lyginus makes this one and only appearance in history and its location cannot be identified with any certainty.⁴⁹ About all we can say is that it was located south of the Danube and probably fairly close to it, given Alexander's apparently slow march on the campaign to this point. In a testimony to "barbarian" intelligence gathering systems, Syrmus, king of the Triballians, had been monitoring Alexander's advance for some time and had fully expected and prepared for his invasion of Triballian lands. Both Syrmus and the neighbouring Thracian tribes had sent their women, children and other valuables to take refuge on an island in the centre of the Danube called Peuce Island (Pine Tree Island).

Peuce Island

Syrmus had been planning more than simply evacuating his non-combatants to the safety of the Danube; he gathered his forces together to oppose Alexander. He was not foolish enough to simply draw up his troops in front of Alexander's advance, however. First, he allowed his troops to hide in the woods and allowed the Macedonian army to move north. Once they had passed he made for the vicinity of the Lyginus river, directly across Alexander's lines of supply and communication back to Macedonia. Here, Lyginus made camp and began making preparations to oppose Alexander.

Alexander's scouting parties had been active in searching the local area looking for Lyginus, but the natives were far too clever to be easily caught by the Macedonians. Once reports did start to filter in that the Triballians in some numbers had managed to get in behind him and had taken up a

defensive position on the Lyginus river, Alexander immediately turned the army around and marched back towards the location of his previous encampment. The news that the enemy was now positioned behind his troops, essentially trapping them in enemy territory, was met without fuss or panic; the army was simply turned around. This is exactly what occurred in a far more famous and celebrated incident before the battle of Issus, and the response there was exactly the same as it was here. Even at this early stage of Alexander's career the army showed complete faith in the new king, and also demonstrated its own discipline. Alexander was lucky to have had Philip as a father.

Alexander marched quickly back to the Lyginus river, a pace unlike any that he had so far employed in the Balkan campaign and caught Syrmus still making preparations for his defence. The Triballians knew that their only chance against Alexander was to have made proper defensive preparations, but Alexander arrived before they were complete and took the defenders completely by surprise, so often the result of Alexander's famous rapid marches. Instead of staying to be slaughtered they made for the protection of a nearby wooded glen close to the river. Alexander deployed his heavy infantry in column, a very curious formation but probably intended not to strike fear into the light-armed Triballians, so as to ensure they would not retreat before they were defeated in battle. If the heavy infantry, probably 12,000 of them, were arrayed in the usual battle order, it is unlikely the Triballians would have met them where they were at their most deadly, on a wide open plain and against an inferior foe. Deployed in front of Alexander's heavy infantry were the archers and slingers with orders to advance "at the double and discharge their missiles in the hope of drawing the enemy from the shelter of the wood into open ground".⁵⁰

This is the first instance of a strategy that Alexander was to re-apply at every opportunity; Devine calls it a "pawn sacrifice" but incorrectly claims that it was first employed at the Granicus.⁵¹ As usual the strategy worked to draw the enemy on to a battlefield of Alexander's choosing. Almost as soon as the Triballians came under the barrage of missiles from the lightly armed Macedonian archers, they came surging out of the woods. Once the enemy had been drawn out, Philotas attacked the right wing with the cavalry from upper Macedonia. Heracleides and Sopolis were similarly deployed to attack the left with the cavalry from Bottiaea and Amphipolis.⁵² Alexander was with the heavy infantry in the centre, presumably with the hypaspists but we are not explicitly told this. Arrian tells us that the Triballians were holding their own until the heavy infantry joined the battle, at which time the cavalry also attacked, having settled for "shooting" at the enemy before this.⁵³ The cavalry would have been acting to try and pin the Triballians in to prevent any from escaping while waiting for the infantry to finish them off.

The reference to the Companion Cavalry "shooting" is obviously a reference to projectile weapons of some sort, but should not be taken to

indicate that they were equipped and employed as horse-archers; this is probably a reference to throwing javelins from horseback. The Companion Cavalry very rarely would have been equipped with anything other than a cavalry sarissa as illustrated by Alexander's reaction to losing his at the battle of the Granicus; he had no back up spear or javelin. Some javelins were probably used here, but probably not many. The main role of the Companions was to harass the enemy until he and the heavy infantry were in a position to engage, at which point the cavalry were to attack as normal and the enemy would be encircled and trapped. The cavalry would have been under orders not to engage until Alexander arrived, he would not have wanted one of his first military encounters to be over before he arrived. It is a little strange that Alexander chose to station himself with the infantry, this was extremely rare outside of a siege situation, and we can only assume that he was not too fond of the experience, given that he very infrequently stationed himself anywhere other than with the Companion Cavalry in future. Whatever the truth, the Triballians were quickly routed; 3,000 of their number lay dead on the field of battle by the end of the day whilst only 11 Macedonian cavalry and 40 infantry were reported to have fallen.⁵⁴ Syrmus was not among the Triballian dead, but this did not immediately concern Alexander. Their resistance had been so ineffective (albeit well planned) that he allowed him to escape to the transient safety of Peuce Island with the rest of his people. It is likely that when Alexander continued north, the remainder of the army and navy were blockading the island to prevent help or supplies from reaching the Triballians.

After the encounter with Syrmus, Alexander marched north, reaching the Danube three days after the battle, arriving at a prearranged rendezvous with part of the fleet. The fleet must have been dispatched from Macedonia at the outset of the campaign and this probably explains why Alexander's pace was so leisurely; he wanted to give his navy time to arrive. Once he rendezvoused with the fleet, the hypaspists were embarked on the ships and an attempt was made to force a landing on Peuce Island, where the remaining Triballians and Thracians had taken refuge; but the areas suitable for landing were either too heavily defended or else too steep to disembark troops. The strong current in the Danube was also a significant factor in the failed attempt. After the failure to land his troops on the island, Alexander decided to cross the Danube and campaign against the Getae instead, one of a large number of very warlike tribes to inhabit the regions north of the Danube. This defeat by natural barrier, as it were, is extremely unusual; we can only speculate that if this incident had occurred later in Alexander's life he would not have given up so easily.

Getae

On the north bank of the Danube a large force of Getae (apparently meaning “immortals”) had gathered, 4,000 cavalry and 10,000 infantry according to Arrian.⁵⁵ These were already in battle array and stationed along the north bank of the river; this indicated that the rival tribes had communicated the threat posed by Alexander to each other. A concerted resistance may have had more effect; instead an enemy divided was easy prey for Alexander. Alexander ordered tents to be filled with hay and all available water-borne transport to be requisitioned with the intention of it being used to ferry troops over the river during the night. There were apparently a great many small dug-out boats in the vicinity that the natives used for fishing and trading, but none were particularly large. Despite the large number of boats, the presence of his fleet, and the many artificial rafts that were filled with hay, Alexander only managed to ferry 1,500 cavalry and 4,000 infantry across the river. Not an excessively large number but the undertaking was at night across a fast flowing river under potential opposition, although the landing was actually concealed by the tall grain fields. Alexander began by having his heavy infantry use their spears to flatten the grain, thus partially creating the battlefield upon which he wanted to fight. Arrian specifically used the term “spears” rather than “sarissas”; this is another possible example of Alexander's heavy infantry being equipped more like traditional hoplites. The reason in this case is obvious, as it would have been all but impossible to carry a sarissa on a makeshift raft (or small boat) across a river at night.

Once the advance force was on the open plain the infantry took up their usual central location with Alexander and the cavalry on the right. The infantry were formed up in close formation, but over an extended front which meant that their rank depth would have been minimal, perhaps only a few men. The Getae broke quickly after a rapid cavalry charge timed to coincide with an infantry advance. Arrian tells us the Getae were badly shaken by Alexander's crossing of the Danube during the night, by his rapid attack, and the “fearful sight of the phalanx advancing upon them in a solid mass”.⁵⁶ The Gatae were one of the many tribes with a warlike reputation, but they were clearly not a well drilled professional army like the Macedonians.

It is precisely this fearful reaction that Alexander had wanted to avoid in the earlier battle against the Triballians; there he advanced in a narrow column, here on a wide front; the difference of effect upon the enemy is evident. The Getae fled to their city some distance away, but Alexander followed them and the city was quickly sacked, again with the booty being immediately transported south to Macedonia. Upon the return to the Danube, Alexander received the surrender of Syrmus and the Triballians on Peuce Island. The blockade had been brief but effective.

The timing of the campaign against the Getae is of interest: we know Alexander set off from Amphipolis in early April, the crossing of the Danube

and the campaign against the Getae did not occur until around June, and Thebes was not sacked until October.⁵⁷ Thus, this part of the campaign took around two months; the entire Balkan campaign took only four months. Alexander seemed to be in no hurry at all, unlike many of his later operations. Alexander was probably conscious that, once his Persian campaign began, he would be a very long way from Macedonia's troublesome northern frontier and wanted to leave a lasting impression upon the natives. In this he was evidently successful.

Upon re-crossing the Danube, Alexander received information that Cleitus, son of Bardylis, was in revolt and had been joined by Glaucias of the Taulantians, and further that the Autariatae were planning to attack Alexander whilst on the march. Alexander, seeking allies, set off for his long-time friend Langarus of the Agrianes. There is nothing that survives in the sources as to the content of the meeting, but the Agrianians became Alexander's most loyal allies. They were also amongst his most overworked troops during his career.

From the meeting with Langarus, Alexander set off for Pellium where, after initially getting into some considerable difficulty, he saved the situation with a masterful fighting retreat in which he used catapults as field artillery for the first time. He then returned to the city under cover of darkness and sacked it with much slaughter. Again, here Alexander was making a statement to any who would rebel or resist: such actions would not be tolerated and would be met with brutal force.⁵⁸

Alexander's Balkan campaign provides us with the first opportunity to examine Alexander's generalship without the safety net of Philip, or even of Parmenio, who was with the advance force in Asia Minor. The campaign is worthy of praise, but was not without significant mistakes.

This campaign lasted four months; much of that time was spent travelling at what can only be described as sedate pace from one minor battle to the next. We hear of very few military encounters, but many towns and cities would have been sacked. Most of these towns would probably have been uninhabited at the time as, for example, we know that Syrmus had evacuated his non-combatants to safety before Alexander arrived. The booty raised from such actions would have been invaluable to Alexander, as would the reputation amongst the natives that his actions generated.

During this first campaign, Alexander showed none of the rapidity of movement that was to become synonymous with a Macedonian campaign in later years. He also showed a significant lack of appreciation of the need for military intelligence (or at least the poor quality of his scouts) in allowing the Triballians to circle in behind him before the Peuce Island encounter, but evidently learned from this mistake by dispatching Philotas to gather intelligence before the Pellium campaign, perhaps with limited success. His final mistake was in allowing himself to become trapped in the plain outside

Pellium; we can only speculate that in later years he would have left a column to besiege Pellium whilst he set off to defeat the Taulantians on ground of his own choosing, rather than allowing them to link up.

In this campaign we do see the beginnings of a number of strategies that recur repeatedly in Alexander's career: first of all, his constant intent of drawing the enemy on to terrain of his choosing, to fight on his terms as far as possible, illustrated by his use of lightly armed troops to draw the Triballians out of their wooded glen onto a plain, and again with the Getae, flattening the grain fields creating a plain. His inexperience as a siege commander was apparent at Pellium, but even here we see him devising a unique strategy, as with the shield device in the Haemus Mountains, and executing it perfectly to extricate himself from a very difficult situation.

If the intention of this campaign was to pacify Macedonia's northern borders, then it was a spectacular success; the area remained trouble-free throughout his reign. Further to this the treaties imposed by Alexander specified that they were to provide troops for the Persian campaign.⁵⁹ These peoples were sometimes assumed to be little more than hostages, but played a significant role on secondary missions and as garrison troops, allowing the Macedonian field army to stay intact.

After the sack of Pellium, Alexander marched at lightening speed south to Thebes where he sacked one of the oldest cities in Greece, an act for which the Greeks never forgave him. From Alexander's perspective he was making the same kind of statement to the southern Greeks as he had just been making to the barbarians of the north: resistance was futile. The effect of the sack of Thebes was instant, Arrian tells us:⁶⁰

the Arcadians who had started out in order to assist in the rising condemned to death those of their compatriots who had urged them to do so; the Eleans granted pardons to their political exiles simply because they were on good terms with Alexander; the various branches of the Aetolians all sent representatives to beg forgiveness on the ground that they had supported the revolt only because of the news from Thebes (that Alexander was dead)

Representatives were sent to Alexander from all over Greece offering their congratulations on a successful Balkan campaign, and offering thanks for his safe return. Alexander received these delegations with general sentiment; he needed Greece to remain loyal during his coming campaign. His response to Athens was slightly different, however. In his letter to the Athenians he demanded the surrender of nine key Athenian citizens, including Demosthenes and Ephialtes (who later died resisting Alexander at Halicarnassus). The Athenians, to their credit, refused and begged Alexander for leniency. Alexander's thoughts were clearly already elsewhere and he longed for the start of his Persian campaign; he relented and dropped his demands. The only demand he made was for Charidemus to be excelled,

which he duly was (he travelled to Asia and took refuge with the Great King). Alexander also secured the use of a number of Athenian triremes, although these were of poor quality as he would later discover.

With matters in Greece settled, Alexander returned to Macedonia, secure in the belief that Antipater, his chosen regent, would have few problems from the mainland Greeks or Macedonia's northern neighbours. Alexander spent the winter making final preparations for the Persian expedition, and at the start of the campaigning season of 334 he set off east through Thrace on the way to the Hellespont, and Asia beyond.

Chapter Three

The Battle of the Granicus River, 334

After twenty days of marching, the army of conquest reached the Hellespont. Before attempting the crossing, Alexander first made sacrifice at the tomb of Protesilaus, the first man of Agamemnon's expedition to set foot in Asia at the start of the Trojan War. Alexander had not only gathered a formidable army, but had also gathered together a fleet of some 160 triremes, and a host of smaller transport vessels; powerful but still less than half the number that the Persians could put to sea.

Before Alexander had set out from Macedonia he had sent a message to Parmenio, who at the time was leading the expeditionary force in Asia Minor, instructing him to rendezvous with the king at the prearranged crossing point. Parmenio had met with some initial success in Asia Minor, but after making impressive initial gains the Persian satraps had gradually been retaking lost ground. By the time Alexander was preparing to cross the Hellespont, Parmenio was not in control of a great deal of land.

Parmenio was given full responsibility to transport the army from Sestus to Abydos while Alexander, never one to stand idle for long, took his capital ship and sailed to the Achaean harbour near Cape Sigeium, northwest of Troy. After making sacrifice and dancing naked around the tomb of Achilles, fixing in peoples minds that he was the reincarnation of the Homeric hero, he returned to Abydos. Transporting the army, along with the whole of the baggage train, across the Hellespont must have taken several days at least, but was complete by the time of Alexander's return. Alexander met the assembled army at Arisbe before proceeding, on the morning of the following day, to Percote, which is known from Xenophon⁶¹ to have been a harbour city and was associated with the river Practius in Homer. The day after the army continued in a northeasterly direction reaching Lampsacus before Alexander paused briefly at the river Practius.

Throughout this time the army were sending out scouts daily in an attempt to accurately locate and track the Persian forces. The Macedonians were aware that the enemy was in the general vicinity of Zelea, but Alexander was obviously cautious as his rate of march was not rapid. From the river Practius, the army marched past Coloniae to Hermotus, the exact locations of which have not yet been identified; suffice to say that we can be reasonably certain that they were situated in valleys south of the hills that border the Sea

of Marmara. At Hermetus a secondary column was detached under Panegorus to take possession of Priapus which had offered to surrender without struggle.⁶²

The text of Arrian, along with a certain amount of speculation as to the location of cities along the route would, therefore, suggest that Alexander marched along the coast road until somewhere just after the river Paesus, where he turned inland, crossed the Kemer Cay, and marched on to the plain so that he could arrive at the Granicus in a virtually deployed state. This route has the advantage of being quick and avoiding the rough terrain of the coast around Parion; it also enabled Alexander to approach the Granicus fully prepared for battle.

Topography

The identification of the Granicus with the river now called the Koçabaş Cay seems all but certain: Strabo's statement that it flows between the Aesopus and the Priapus leaves little room for doubt.⁶³ The exact location of the battlefield is a little more difficult to pinpoint. Arrian is the only source that provides us with any relevant information: he states that the Persians were encamped at Zelea when they received the news of Alexander's crossing into Asia; at that point they advanced to the Granicus and took up a defensive position where they must have waited for perhaps a week for the Macedonians to arrive. Plutarch refers to the location as being the "Gates of Asia", and the satraps evidently were banking on an invading army being more inclined to travel a well trodden route.⁶⁴ Persian tactics will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter; suffice it to say that positioning themselves close to their permanent base at Zelea and the main supply port at Cyzicus was a sound if unimaginative strategy.

Our sources are at best vague on the topography of the battlefield itself. Arrian tells us very little, only that the river was obviously deep in many places and that "the banks were very high and, in places, almost sheer"; he also tells us that the Greek mercenary infantry employed by the Persians were positioned throughout the whole battle on higher ground some way behind the river. This higher ground was likely some foothills; the strong implication from the sources is that the ground was elevated, but that the ridge was a gentle slope rather than precipitous.⁶⁵ Today the foothills upon which the Greek mercenaries were stationed are around 1.5–2km east of the river, although there are lower hillocks around 300–400m between the river and the foothills. The Greek mercenaries were, therefore, close enough to see the battle but far too far away to influence the crossing.

Today, the banks of the Granicus are overgrown with vegetation and it is difficult to see across the river from the plain on one side to that on the other. We can reasonably assume that no such vegetation existed in 334, as the

Persian commanders saw Alexander's army clearly. We also know that Alexander's army advanced into and out of the river in something like a continuous line, making the presence of vegetation in any quantity highly unlikely. Whatever vegetation may have existed before the Persians arrived would have been cut down for firewood as the army waited for Alexander to arrive.

The modern river is around 20m wide and the alluvial soil at the top of the river banks in June is sandy to a shallow depth. Further down the riverbank the soil becomes a firm clay and the riverbed itself is hard clay. The banks are up to 5 or 6m high, and of varying degrees of inclination, sometimes quite steep, although in some areas there are gently gravel slopes into the riverbed on both banks, these being crucial in understanding the battle. These gravel beds are nowhere mentioned in the sources, but they should not be dismissed on these grounds, as the descriptions of the river are far from complete and comprehensive. Below the confluence with the River Biga, the river channel is up to 40m wide, and would therefore have presented Alexander with a far more difficult crossing if he had chosen that area, another reason that the Persians correctly assumed that Alexander would cross where he did. Although the Persian thinking is logical and understandable, wherever they would have taken up their defensive position, Alexander would have met them. Positioning themselves at the Gates of Asia meant that they were defending an obvious crossing point in the river.

Plutarch describes the Granicus as a raging torrent; in June at the time of the battle this is extremely unlikely to have been the case. Our sources do like to portray Alexander's difficulties as being rather greater than reality on occasion to make the victory all the more glorious. To his credit, Arrian makes no such claim; he clearly did not picture the river as a major obstacle; the pull of the current is only mentioned in passing with no real implication that it caused trouble.⁶⁶ On this occasion Arrian, who is as interested as anyone in the heroic image of Alexander, does not exaggerate the difficulty of the terrain in order to make Alexander's achievements more impressive.

The assumption that a modern river runs along the same course as its ancient equivalent is always dangerous, and in the case of the Granicus there is some academic dispute in this regard. Most scholars tend to believe that the river in antiquity either ran along roughly the same course as today, or else it was slightly to the west; more than this we cannot say without discussion that is beyond the scope of this work.⁶⁷

Sources

The battle of the Granicus River is perhaps the most difficult of Alexander's set-piece battles to interpret as there are two entirely different surviving narratives preserved in the sources. The problems surrounding the battle are

It is at this point that the real difficulties begin with Diodorus: at dawn Alexander “boldly brought his army across the river and deployed in good order before they could stop him”.⁷⁰ This raises at least two problems: first that the battle took place at dawn, as compared to the evening in Arrian's version; and second, it would have taken several hours to cross even a very minor river and deploy perhaps 17,000 troops. This would likely have been the Macedonian core of the army: perhaps 9,000 heavy infantry, 3,000 hypaspists, 4,000 cavalry and 1,000 Agrianians and archers. I believe that the remainder of the army would also have been present, but deployed in a second, unused and undiscussed line. It is inconceivable that the Persians would make no attempt to attack the Macedonians when they were at their most vulnerable. It was, after all (according to Diodorus), their plan to drive the Macedonians back into the river; if this was their intended tactic then they likely would have allowed some Macedonian cavalry across before they launched their counter-attack, but surely not the entire army; the Persian high command was surely not stupid.

The Persians began their counter moves by deploying their “mass of horsemen all along the front of the Macedonians”.⁷¹ This would have led to a novel, and perhaps unique arrangement of forces; two lines of cavalry opposing each other with the infantry stationed behind. Although generally this would make little tactical sense, here it is reasonable as Alexander crossed the Granicus first with his cavalry, and the Persians wished to oppose the Macedonian cavalry with their own; and no doubt wanted the glory of killing Alexander to fall to one of their own, rather than to the Greek mercenary infantry.

Diodorus then gives us the Persian order of battle, something Arrian fails to do. Memnon of Rhodes and Arsamenes (Arsames in Curtius 3.4.3 and Arrian 2.4.5), satrap of Cilicia, held the Persian left wing, each commanding his own cavalry. This is extremely puzzling for two reasons: firstly, Memnon of Rhodes is usually thought of as being the commander of the Greek mercenary infantry, yet here he is in the Persian front line commanding a contingent of cavalry. Secondly, the cavalry are described as “his own cavalry”; this could imply that the cavalry in question were Greek mercenaries, which the Persians were not supposed to possess at the Granicus. More than likely this is simply a mistake on the part of Diodorus.

Next to them was Arsites, the satrap of Hellespontine Phrygia, commanding the Paphlagonian cavalry. Then came Spithrobates (Spithridates), satrap of Lydia and Ionia, at the head of the Hyrcanian cavalry. Rheomithres held the Persian right wing and was in command of 1,000 Medes, 2,000 Bactrians and 2,000 other unspecified cavalry; Arrian adds the names of Petines and Niphates, which Diodorus omits.

We are also told that the centre of the Persian line was occupied by “other national contingents” who were “numerous and picked for their valour”,

although Diodorus fails to tell us which province these contingents were from, how numerous they were or who their commanders were.⁷² In total Diodorus presents a Persian order of battle consisting of 10,000 Persian cavalry and around 100,000 infantry, although these, of course, were withheld from the main battle. Justin gives the Persian total strength at 600,000, whilst Arrian lists 20,000 cavalry and 20,000 infantry. I will argue later in this chapter that Arrian's figures are more realistic, although still probably too high; it is sufficient to note at this point that Diodorus gives a surprisingly low estimate for the strength of the Persian cavalry.⁷³

The battle was then joined and seems to have proceeded in a highly stylized manner with the Thessalians and Parmenio defending on the left, whilst Alexander pressed the attack on the right with the Companion Cavalry, as was almost always the case. This is exactly the same as the descriptions of the other set-piece battles that Alexander fought and is, to say the least, suspicious. In Diodorus' account the climactic moment of the battle came when Spithrobates gathered around himself a "large body" (apparently only 40 strong) of Persians and charged into the Macedonian lines towards Alexander, who turned to meet the new threat.⁷⁴

What follows is virtually an Homeric-style description of single combat between, initially, Alexander and Spithrobates. Spithrobates threw his javelin with such force that it pierced Alexander's shield and lodged in his breastplate. The javelin was then apparently shaken loose as it "dangled" from his arm; this requires some discussion. If the javelin was dangling from Alexander's breastplate then it must have passed completely through his shield, although we should note that it did not cause injury to Alexander and therefore did not break the skin. For the javelin to have pierced Alexander's shield it must have been thrown with more force than seems possible for any individual to achieve, let alone one mounted on horseback where it would have been impossible to plant one's feet or pivot the body in order to achieve the maximum velocity; further to this, it is far from clear if Macedonian cavalry carried shields at all. The Alexander mosaic from the House of the Faun in Pompeii clearly shows Alexander without a shield. Interpretation of this mosaic is controversial; it has been thought to represent the battle of Issus but may in fact be Gaugamela. Polybius clearly states that Greek (by Polybius' time synonymous with Macedonian in such matters) cavalry did use shields, and that the Romans adopted Greek practice in this matter. Arrian on the other hand states that Macedonian cavalry only used shields when they expected to fight on foot.⁷⁵ The passage that follows is highly rhetorical and clearly designed to add to Alexander's heroism, "ranks in both armies cried out at the superlative display of prowess".⁷⁶

It is in this passage that we see Alexander killing Spithrobates, and his brother Rhosaces splitting Alexander's helmet, and then having his arm severed by Cleitus as he prepared to deliver the *coup de grace*. 17.21.1–3 is then even more rhetorical than the previous passage; Alexander is presented

as almost single-handedly defeating the cream of the Persian cavalry, killing Atizyes, Pharnuces and Mithrobuzanes in the process. After the loss of so many of their senior commanders, the Persian cavalry seem to have fled the field leaving the “foot soldiers to engage one another”. Persian casualties are given as more than 10,000 infantry and not less than 2,000 cavalry with 20,000 prisoners taken. Diodorus also tells us that Alexander won the palm for bravery and was regarded as the chief author of the victory; more significantly the Thessalians were also honoured after having “won a great reputation for valour because of the skilful handling of their squadrons and their unmatched fighting quality”.⁷⁷ This last point is most significant as will become apparent in the final section of this chapter.

Arrian's Account and its Major Problems

Alexander approached through a plain that allowed him to deploy his troops in battle order long before they arrived at the river. This may be an indication that he was far from sure that the Persians would actually hold their defensive position, rather than advancing to meet him. Alexander massed his infantry into groups, with cavalry protecting both wings. No further information is given about these two groups of infantry, but it would be reasonable to conclude that they consisted of one group containing the Macedonian heavy infantry and hypaspists, and the other consisting of all of the mercenary and allied infantry. These two groups would have been roughly the same size and it is probable that the allied troops were stationed behind the Macedonians forming something of a reserve phalanx, as they do not appear in any accounts of the battle and therefore were almost certainly not stationed alongside the Macedonians. Ahead of the main body were an unusually large number of scouts, some 1,400 strong; these were miniature war bands rather than simple scouts, again indicating that Alexander half expected the Persians to attack him as he advanced. Arrian tells us of two scouting parties, both of which were of significant size. The first was commanded by Amyntas son of Arrabaeus (more on him later) and consisted of an *ile* of Companion Cavalry commanded by Socrates, and four *ilai* of light cavalry. The second was commanded by Hegelochus; this scouting party consisted of all of the lancers (*prodromoi*, numbering 900) and 500 light troops. Amyntas' scouting party must have rejoined the main body of the army just before this time.

The scouts reported to Alexander that the Persians had taken up a position on the far bank of the river, interestingly not set back from the river, but along its banks. After receiving this news Alexander made preparations for an immediate attack, not too difficult a task given that he was advancing in battle array anyway. At this point we have Arrian presenting us with the first of five dialogues where Alexander is seen rejecting the advice of

Parmenio.⁷⁸ Arrian has Parmenio say:

My lord ... in my view our best plan in the present situation is to halt here, on this side of the river. The enemy infantry is heavily outnumbered by ours, and I do not think they will run the risk of remaining so close to us throughout the night; so if they withdraw, we can get across at dawn without opposition. Indeed, we shall be over before they have a chance of getting into position to meet us. But to attempt the crossing in the present circumstances would, I think, be a great risk.

Parmenio's advice essentially was to avoid an immediate frontal attack, but instead to wait until dawn. He argues that the Persians, being so inferior in infantry, would not dare to remain at the river's edge throughout the night, but would withdraw, which would enable the Macedonians to cross unopposed the following morning.

With this strategy Parmenio is proposing something very similar to what Diodorus tells us actually occurred. Parmenio is also made to argue that the river was obviously deep and the banks steep and almost sheer in places making a crossing extremely difficult. Plutarch presents the same picture, but adds the lateness of the day as a further argument used by Parmenio. Alexander dismissively rejects Parmenio's proffered advice, saying:

I should be ashamed of myself if a little trickle of water like this were too much for us to cross without further preparation, when I had no difficulty whatever in crossing the Hellespont. Such hesitancy would be unworthy of the fighting fame of our people and of my own promptitude in the face of danger. Without doubt it would give the Persians added confidence; nothing has yet happened to them to cause them alarm and they would begin to think they were as good soldiers as we were.

These passages are almost certainly later inventions, but may contain cornels of truth; in the second Alexander is demonstrating a fear that his reputation is not yet that of a world conqueror, and that any minor setback could prove fatal to the expedition. He shows he understands the psychology of warfare as well as any in the ancient world.

The two passages quoted above are intriguing: not only is this the first of a series of occasions where Parmenio is presented as the over-cautious older general whose advice is rejected by the young dynamic and heroic Alexander, it is also advice that is unreported but essentially accepted in Diodorus' account where Alexander does attack the following morning and does get across the river before the Persians can form up to oppose him (see above). There are three potential explanations: ⁷⁹

1. Diodorus is wrong; this is certainly the prevailing view amongst

historians.

2. Arrian is wrong; this view also has its adherents, although fewer in number.⁸⁰
3. A third possibility exists in my opinion, that both traditions contain part of the story, and thus it is unwise to reject either completely; more on this later.

After rejecting Parmenio's advice, Alexander proceeded to deploy his troops and Arrian gives us the Macedonian order of battle,⁸¹ first from the extreme right to the centre, then from the extreme left to the centre. From left to right, it is the Thessalians (Calas), the allied cavalry (Philip) and the Thracian cavalry (Agathon), Parmenio having also been sent to the left wing. Then came the heavy infantry *taxis* of Craterus, Meleager, Philip, Amyntas, Coenus and Perdiccas. The hypaspists under Nicanor were to the right of these and on the extreme right of the formation came the Companions commanded by Philotas; next to these were the Paeonians, *Prodromoi* and Socrates' *ile* of cavalry. The archers and Agrianians were also stationed on the right in an ill-defined position. No mention is made in Arrian of the very large contingents of allied infantry or of the mercenaries.

The Persians are depicted as positioning their cavalry, undoubtedly their strength, along the bank "on a very broad front". If the Persians were eight deep, as they were at Issus the following year, then they would have had around 20,000 cavalry spread across a 4.5km front. Arrian tells us that the infantry, the Greek mercenaries, were drawn up "in the rear".⁸²

This positioning of the Persian cavalry along the banks of the river is one of the greatest problems with Arrian's account of the battle: it is sometimes resolved by suggesting that they were in fact stationed along the river, but set back from it by a few hundred metres from the banks themselves.⁸³ That they were stationed "on the bank parallel to the river" is stated quite explicitly by Arrian; any attempt to move them on to the plain runs counter to what we are explicitly told and we have no overwhelming reason to accept this; we can only conclude that the Persians stationed their best troops directly along the river bank to take the brunt of Alexander's assault.

This alignment at first makes little sense; the defence of a river bank is usually better left to heavy infantry who can present an impenetrable wall of spears to the enemy whose formation will be broken and in some disarray as they emerge from a river crossing, even a relatively easy one as at the Granicus. If, however, the cavalry were equipped with only javelins and sabres then they would not be up to the challenge of facing the Macedonian Companion Cavalry on equal terms. If this were the case then stationing them along the river bank makes a little more sense. Given how they performed during the vicious fighting that occurred once Alexander's cavalry gained the river bank, it does not seem likely to me that the Persians were any less well equipped than they were at Gaugamela, or less well equipped

than the Macedonians for that matter.

I think we have to look rather deeper to find the Persian motivation for assuming this formation, and I suspect the answer is twofold:

1. The Persians did not trust Memnon or the Greek mercenaries.
2. The Persian satraps wanted the glory of defeating Alexander to fall to them.

There is little doubt that the Persians did not trust Memnon; the out of hand rejection of his advice regarding the scorched earth policy is evidence of this. Memnon was Greek after all, and the Persians simply did not trust Greeks. If the Greek mercenaries had been commanded by a non-entity, the Persians would likely have adopted a more traditional formation, but they could not risk the glory going to a man like Memnon. The second point is of equal importance; the satraps were always competing for glory and honours in the eyes of the Great King, and if they left the victory to the Greek mercenaries they would gain nothing in terms of prestige, and they risked Memnon becoming a powerful and trusted figure at court. Although the Persian formation was far from an ideal one to oppose the Macedonian crossing, the satraps would have viewed it as necessary in the absence of any native Persian infantry or Greeks they could unreservedly trust.

It is also worth noting that, given the Persian intention to use missile weapons against the Macedonians, coupled with the inevitability that the Macedonian cavalry charge would be broken by the river and its steep eastern banks, there was in fact little danger to the Persian cavalry; their defensive position was actually quite strong.

The initial attack was on the extreme right of the Macedonian formation: Alexander ordered Amyntas into the river with the Paeonians, advanced scouts (*Prodromoi*) and one *taxis* of heavy infantry (we are not told which). Preceding this attack, however, was Ptolemy, son of Philip, with Socrates' *ile*. This Ptolemy is a key figure in my own reconstruction of the battle later.

The command structure of this attacking force is complex and difficult to fathom from the pages of Arrian. It could be that Socrates' *ile* was detached from the overall command of Amyntas in that sector, and was in fact under Ptolemy, a man who is apparently otherwise unknown. If this were the case then it would mean that Ptolemy was a temporary commander deputizing for Socrates, but Socrates himself is mentioned just a few lines later by Arrian. The crux of the matter revolves around the figure of Ptolemy; who was he? Given the size of the command he likely was not a senior individual, not even one occupying a small temporary command. It has been argued that this Ptolemy is the bodyguard who later was to die at Halicarnassus whilst commanding a force of hypaspists and light infantry, but I think there is a more likely alternative. ⁸⁴

If the Ptolemy in question is in fact not the otherwise unknown son of Philip, but was in fact Ptolemy, son of Lagus (the historian and Arrian's primary source), then we could be some small way towards understanding this battle. A fuller explanation is given in my tentative new theory presented at the end of this chapter.⁸⁵

The infantry *taxis* that formed part of this initial assault was also unusual. We may typically expect this unit to be one of hypaspists who traditionally form a cohesive link between the heavy infantry in the centre and the cavalry on the right. They are also entirely used to these difficult and challenging operations. We must remember, however, that the term *taxis* is elastic when used by our sources and was often used to describe any infantry unit, even on occasion light infantry.⁸⁶ With this in mind, and noting the proximity of the archers and Agrianians, I believe it is likely that one of these two groups was the *taxis* in question, both of which were eminently more suited to this type of action than the heavy infantry, even than the hypaspists.

It would seem from Arrian that almost immediately after the Amyntas/Socrates attack was launched, Alexander himself charged into the river.⁸⁷

The first to engage the Persians were cut down and died a soldier's death, though some of the leading troops fell back upon Alexander, who was now on his way across: indeed, he was almost over, at the head of the army's right wing.

Arrian also tells us that Alexander kept his line oblique to the pull of the current to prevent a flank attack and to ensure as solid a front as possible as they emerged from the water. The banks were steep in places, and only easily climbed where the gravel beds descended to the river on either side. It is unlikely that any two of these gravel beds faced each other directly, so a diagonal crossing was forced upon Alexander. The text reads as though the army filtered over the river in something of a continuous line, moving towards the right. But the Greek seems to translate as “in the direction the stream drew them”, which is to say downstream, to the left.⁸⁸

What ensued was vicious hand-to-hand combat in which the Macedonian troops seem to have suffered badly from a “continuous volley of missiles from the Persians” and also from the disadvantages of the terrain. The lead troops were forced back towards the river bed and into Alexander and the Companion Cavalry still struggling to get up one of the gravel slopes; this should have caused massive confusion amongst the Macedonians, but almost instantly Arrian transfers his battle narrative from the river banks to dry land using the phrase “a moment later he (Alexander) was in the thick of it, charging at the head of his men straight for the spot where the Persian commanders stood”.⁸⁹ This is, to say the least, difficult to accept. Equally strange is Arrian's assertion that “things soon turned in favour of Alexander's men” largely due to their experience and their superior weapons. Evidently a very significant section of the battle narrative has been omitted by Arrian,

probably one in which Alexander struggled mightily and suffered heavy casualties forcing a bridgehead on the eastern bank. The only hint of this is Arrian describing the struggle as “a cavalry battle fought with infantry tactics”.

Whatever actually occurred during the time period Arrian omitted, Alexander did gain the far bank and engaged the Persians on equal footing, if heavily outnumbered. Now on dry land, the Macedonians gradually began to gain the upper hand, but the fighting was fierce. Arrian tells us:

their experience and weight of their attack began to tell, added to the advantage of the long cornel-wood spears over the light lances of the Persians.

During the fighting, Alexander's spear was broken. He called to his groom, Aretis, for a replacement, but Aretis was himself in great difficulty having broken his own spear too. Both men fought on bravely with the broken halves of their respective weapons. In a break in the fighting Aretis held aloft his spear so that Alexander could see it was broken, and asked the king to seek a replacement elsewhere. On seeing this, and hearing the exchange, one of Alexander's bodyguards, a man called Demaratus of Corinth, handed Alexander his spear. Once properly armed again, Alexander caught sight of Mithridates, Darius' son-in-law, and instantly charged towards him at the front of a wedge formation ahead of the main body. Mithridates was in command of a detachment of Persian cavalry, but Alexander cut his way through them and struck Mithridates in the face with his new lance, hurling him to the ground.⁹⁰

On seeing this, Rhoesaces gathered some cavalry around him and galloped, scimitar in hand, towards the now quite isolated Alexander. Rhoesaces aimed a potentially fatal blow at Alexander's head, slicing off part of his helmet. The helmet evidently saved Alexander's life, but he was still potentially in great peril isolated as he was in the midst of the Persian forces. Despite the blow, Alexander hardly missed a beat. He recovered his wits almost instantly and was immediately upon Rhoesaces, thrusting his spear though the Persian's chest.

Spithridates was the next Persian noble to engage Alexander, again raising his scimitar to deliver a killing blow to the young king from behind, but:

Cleitus, son of Dropidas, was too quick for him, and severed his shoulder scimitar and all.

Arrian and Diodorus both describe how Rhoesaces sliced off part of Alexander's helmet; however, in Arrian, Rhoesaces is killed by Alexander and it is Spithridates who lost his arm to Cleitus as he raised it for a critical blow against the king. This part of the battle is so confused in our sources that we shall never be able to get at the true sequence of events, or even the Persian nobles involved.⁹¹

As the fighting went on, Alexander was gradually and inexorably reinforced by increasing numbers of Companion Cavalrymen gaining the eastern banks and further pressing the Persians. In what appears to be a short space of time, but in reality was likely to have been perhaps an hour or more, the Persians began to struggle badly under the increasing pressure.

There was no escape for horse or rider from the thrust of the Macedonian spears; they were being forced back from their position and, in addition to the weight of the main attack, they were suffering considerable damage from the lightly armed troops who had forced their way in among the cavalry.

The Persians broke around the figure of Alexander, the panic quickly spreading throughout the Persian lines until all of the Persian cavalry were in retreat. The Greek mercenary force, along with Memnon, were left stranded by the fleeing Persians. Arrian tells us that they remained shoulder to shoulder where they were initially, not out of bravery or loyalty to the Persian cause, but because the suddenness of the retreat had robbed them of their wits. The reality was probably that cavalry could easily escape, but heavy infantry were slow moving and would have easily been mown down by Alexander's cavalry as they fled. They were in a relatively strong defensive position if they held firm, and they likely hoped to sue for terms; their hopes were misplaced.

Persian cavalry losses were limited to around 1,000 as Alexander allowed them to flee the field of battle without being harried too heavily. As soon as they broke he turned his attention towards the Greek mercenaries. In a most unsavoury incident Alexander had them surrounded and massacred "to a man".⁹² We know that this is a considerable exaggeration on the part of Arrian as some Greek mercenaries who escaped the Granicus later fought at Halicarnassus, and many were sent back to Macedonia to work in hard labour camps.

The fate of the mercenaries is not mentioned in Diodorus. Plutarch, on the other hand, in an entirely more plausible passage, has them suing for peace and being angrily rejected by Alexander before a very bloody battle ensues in which the Macedonians sustain their heaviest casualties of the whole battle. Arrian lastly gives a more substantial list of Persian dead than does Diodorus; it includes: Niphates, Petines, Spithridates (Satrap of Lydia), Mithrubazanes (satrap of Cappadocia), Mithridates (son-in-law of Darius), Arbupales (son of Darius and grandson of Artaxerxes II), Pharnuces (brother of Darius' wife and otherwise unknown) and Omares (commander of the Greek mercenaries). Arsites escaped to Phrygia where he killed himself, apparently feeling responsible for the defeat.

Plutarch's account of the battle is very similar to that of Arrian, and is clearly derived from the same source. This source is usually assumed to be a combination of Aristobulus and Ptolemy, although I shall argue later for

Ptolemy being the main source for this tradition. The main difference from Arrian's account is that Plutarch seriously exaggerates the difficulties of the terrain faced by Alexander; saying for example that the Macedonians were “swept off their feet” by the fast flowing river. Similarly little can be taken from Justin, and Curtius' account of the battle is lost.⁹³

The Battle

In this final section I aim to examine and discuss three main issues: why the battle was fought at the Granicus; what strategies were employed by both sides; and finally to present a tentative new theory of the battle.

We should begin with a discussion of the Persian strategy. Arrian tells us that the Persian army was encamped at Zelea when they received news of Alexander's crossing into Asia.⁹⁴ A debate apparently ensued as to what the most effective Persian strategy would be for the coming campaign. Memnon advocated a policy of avoiding battle, of withdrawal before the advancing Macedonians and of destroying all of the crops and towns in his path, whilst at the same time using their superior fleet to carry the war into Greece. Arsites argued vehemently against this strategy, refusing to allow any homes within his satrapy to be burned; in this “the other commanders supported him”. It probably did not escape the attentions of the Persians that Memnon's estates at Abydos were left untouched by Alexander; if deliberate, this was a brilliant strategy on the part of the Macedonians.⁹⁵

A scorched earth policy would not have been unthinkable for the Persians; they had done it before when faced by Agesilaus half a century before and would do so again. Most historians have seen this rejection of Memnon's strategy as being the product of “command by a committee” and have seen this as the Persians' biggest weakness. I think, however, that it is more likely that Arsites was in sole command given that the battle was being fought within his satrapy; it was he who rejected Memnon's strategy and it was he who, after the defeat, committed suicide for fear that he would be blamed for the defeat.⁹⁶

Arsites' rejection of Memnon's strategy was for a number of reasons. It is certainly true that he, as a member of the Persian nobility, would have found it insulting to say the least that he was being advised to withdraw in the face of an army commanded by an untried, beardless youth. Memnon's loyalty was also something of a question for the Persian satraps. Memnon was Greek, but had been related by marriage to the Persian noble Artabazus since before 362; after Artabazus revolted from Artaxerxes in 359/8 he spent some time in exile at Philip's court and was thus well placed to offer advice to the Persians on the Macedonians. Memnon's loyalty to the Great King was almost certainly absolute, but his relationship with the satraps was something rather more strained. Memnon probably viewed himself as a rival of Arsites

for the command of the Persian forces in the west, but Arsites probably only saw him as a potentially disloyal Greek mercenary.⁹⁷

Many historians seem to see Memnon's strategy as being sound, and rejected for essentially unsound non-military reasons. This, I believe, is also the wrong view. If Memnon's strategy had been implemented and much of Arsites' satrapy had been burned, Alexander would have felt no overwhelming compulsion to follow the Persian army through this devastated territory; he felt no such obligation to follow the Persians after Issus. He could have easily turned south and encouraged a general Ionian revolt against Persian rule. The Ionian cities had a long history of revolting from Persian control and would not have found it uncomfortable to do so again now.

We should also note that, although Memnon had experience of the Macedonians, both from his time in exile at the court of Philip, and from his two years of relatively successful campaigning against the expeditionary force, the Persian nobles lacked this experience. Retreat, even if it were tactically sound, would have seemed like cowardice to Darius, whom the Persian commanders undoubtedly did know and probably feared despite him being relatively new to the throne himself.⁹⁸

The Persian commanders would also have felt that their great superiority in cavalry would have given them a significant tactical advantage, in terms of manoeuvrability, over the Macedonians. Arsites, therefore, had good reasons for not wishing to withdraw, but he also had positive reasons for wishing to engage the Macedonians and to drive them from Asia Minor.

Once the decision to fight had been made, only the location remained. It is usually accepted that the Persians chose the location well. As has already been noted, the eastern bank of the Granicus was steeper than the western, around 4'5m in places, and, although the river was not deep, despite Plutarch's assertions to the contrary, it was sufficient to break up and seriously disrupt a cavalry charge. Plutarch tells us:⁹⁹

Most of the Macedonian officers were alarmed at the depth of the river and of the rough and uneven slopes of the banks on the opposite side, up which they would have to scramble in the face of the enemy

We must also consider that the Persian cavalry were more lightly armed and equipped than the Macedonians; they would have been at a greater tactical disadvantage if they had faced the Macedonian heavy cavalry on flat terrain. The Persians at this time were better suited to throwing their javelins at an enemy struggling to cross difficult terrain and to using their greater mobility against the Macedonians as they struggled to emerge from the river. Devine is being a little unkind when he describes the Persian strategy as “basically sound though unimaginative”.¹⁰⁰

The Persians arrived at the battle site and occupied the eastern bank at an unknown time, but certainly before Alexander arrived: the only real chronology that we have is that the battle was fought in May. Plutarch tells us that the Kings of Macedonia never fought battles in the month of Daesius (the month of May-June), a tradition based upon it being harvest time when traditional citizen soldiers would be otherwise engaged.¹⁰¹

What ensued upon Alexander's arrival is only reported in Arrian and Plutarch: a debate between Alexander and Parmenio as to the best course of action. Parmenio apparently advised waiting until the morning. Both sources have Parmenio's advice being rejected out of hand by Alexander, not for the last time. Diodorus on the other hand has no such debate, but the account of the battle is as if the advice were acted upon.¹⁰² I believe that such a debate probably did occur, but either way the battle itself did not take place until the following morning. The Arrian version clearly comes out of a desire to reflect as much glory as possible upon his subject; we should not forget a point that I shall return to later, that Ptolemy was fighting in roughly the same area as Alexander, the right wing, and so Ptolemy was probably also glorifying his own role in the battle, as well as that of the king.

It is at this point that I seriously diverge from most modern accounts of the battle. During the night, I propose that the army was divided in two; Parmenio was detached from the main body of the army, marched downstream a few kilometres, forded the river, which as noted was only 4–5m wide and not deep, and by the morning was in a position to fight a land battle such as that described by Diodorus. This would essentially be a forerunner of the same strategy Alexander used at the Hydaspes in 327, although far less arduous on this occasion. The argument that this possibility would have caused a Persian withdrawal is, I think, unrealistic.¹⁰³ I noted earlier that they were (in the eyes of Darius and the Persian satraps) faced by nothing more than a beardless youth; withdrawal would have looked like cowardice.

It is difficult to determine exactly which units Parmenio would have taken with him on this secondary column. We can speculate with reasonable certainty that the Thessalian cavalry were under his command; Diodorus tells us that they won “a great reputation for valour” during the fighting and the Arrian version of the battle simply does not allow for this. The Thessalians, and indeed seemingly everyone outside of the immediate vicinity of Alexander, were ignored. It is likely that along with the Thessalians were the Greek allied cavalry under Philip and the Odrysian cavalry under Agathon.¹⁰⁴ These additional units totalled 900 men, and thus Parmenio commanded 2,700 cavalry. The main problem lies with the infantry; the *taxeis* of Meleager and Philip were also under Parmenio's overall command. Alexander and Parmenio would have been aware from the scouting reports the previous evening, and from the evidence of their own eyes, what the Persian strengths and dispositions were; and Parmenio would have had a

good idea as to the Persian strength in Greek mercenaries given that this was his third campaigning season in Asia Minor. Although their numbers were small, around 5,000, cavalry traditionally do not fare well in a direct charge against heavy infantry, some infantry support for Parmenio's detachment, therefore, likely. We are told by Plutarch that at some point "the Macedonian phalanx crossed the river and the infantry of both sides joined the battle".¹⁰⁵ This could be a garbled account of the *taxeis* of Meleager and Philip engaging the Greek mercenary infantry after the Persian cavalry had been routed. It seems likely that Parmenio's detachment probably consisted of 2,700 cavalry and 3,000 infantry, not enough to win victory by itself but enough perform their assigned mission.

Physically getting such a small force across a relatively minor river would have been no great achievement, certainly not when compared to the later, and very similar, crossing in force of the Hydaspes.¹⁰⁶ The Persian response upon learning of the Macedonian manoeuvre was to do very little; their cavalry remained in place to oppose Alexander's crossing; the Greek mercenaries also seem not to have responded, other than probably wheeling to face Parmenio. They chose not to surrender their advantageous position on high ground behind the Persian front lines. This lack of movement on the part of the Greek mercenaries is one of the things Alexander would have been trying to achieve by using the secondary column, to fix them in place so they could not interfere with what he always expected to be the decisive point of the battle, his attack across the river with the Companion Cavalry.

Some time early in the morning, once Parmenio was clearly in position and neutralizing Memnon's Greek mercenary infantry, Alexander began his first encounter with the Persians in a very limited way. The first wave consisted only of Socrates' *ile*, seemingly under the command of Ptolemy. This attack was followed by Amyntas who appears to have been in overall charge of this assault, commanding his *prodromoi* and Paonian cavalry and one unspecified *taxis* of infantry.¹⁰⁷ I have already noted above that this infantry *taxis* is interesting and is likely to have been the Agrianians given that we know they and the archers were stationed on the right of the Macedonian line.

That this initial attack occurred is not in doubt, unless you completely reject Arrian's version.¹⁰⁸ We must, however, ask why were so few troops involved? The answer is simply that it was never intended to force a crossing of the river; the idea was to feign an attack, encourage the Persians to expend their javelins, and then retreat in seeming disarray, virtually forcing the Persians to charge into the river bed after the fleeing Macedonians, thus relinquishing their valuable defensive position.¹⁰⁹ It is at first glance a little surprising that a cavalry unit as valuable as Socrates' *ile* was sacrificed in this manner, but Alexander had to persuade the Persians that a full-scale assault was under way, involving himself and the Companion Cavalry. If an *ile* of Companions had not been used the Persians might not have taken the bait.

After the initial assault had begun, but before its retreat, Alexander and the remaining *ilai* of Companions entered the riverbed. Alexander's movements in the riverbed are a cause of considerable confusion. He moved his troops obliquely, that is to say to left or right rather than straight across; this would essentially have been accepting another piece of Parmenio's advice, that Alexander ran the risk of exiting the stream in column if he did not cross obliquely. This oblique movement was partly designed to extend the Macedonian frontage so that as many troops as possible could emerge simultaneously at the appropriate time from the roughly 100m wide gravel beds on the eastern bank of the river. These gravel beds could accommodate roughly 100 cavalry abreast. The direction of the movement, however, is the problem, as noted earlier. Arrian's text does clearly state that the movement was "in the direction the stream drew them", and thus was indeed downstream and to the left from the perspective of the attacking Macedonians.

As the advance force was retreating in seeming disarray, with the Persians sensing victory and in pursuit, Alexander with his usual consummate timing attacked the disordered Persians from their left. This is why the text of Arrian with the downstream movement seems more reliable than Polyaeus' movement away from the battle. The retreating troops would not have caused disorder amongst the Macedonian Companion Cavalry because they were advancing at an angle and entered the river several hundred metres upstream of the initial assault. The retreating troops would have taken the shortest path across the river, avoiding the advancing cavalry. Alexander was moving downstream towards Socrates and not following on behind him. This attack by Alexander is, as I hope to demonstrate throughout this book and its predecessor, *The Sieges of Alexander the Great*, one of Alexander's hallmark strategies; attacking an enemy from more than one direction simultaneously; he does this during virtually every successful battle and siege throughout his career.

The battle in the riverbed was brief and vicious, with the combat quickly being transferred to the bank. The Persian javelins would have mostly already been used up during the attack by Socrates' *ile*.¹¹⁰ Whilst we can never of course be sure of the exact timescale, a short battle is the most likely. The Persians would probably have fled quickly after seeing several of their leading commanders slain in quick succession.

After the Persian cavalry broke, Plutarch tells us of an engagement between the Macedonian heavy infantry and some native Persian infantry, which also apparently did not last long. These Persians are something of a mystery; they are not mentioned in Diodorus' Persian order of battle. The main problem is that the text of Arrian does seem to imply quite clearly that the light infantry were Greek, fighting on the side of Alexander and intermingled with his cavalry.¹¹¹

Persian cavalry casualties were surprisingly low, around 1,000 in Arrian, 2,000 in Diodorus or 2,500 in Plutarch.¹¹² Persian casualties were low because Alexander immediately turned his attention to the Greek mercenaries who had been fighting against Parmenio's Thessalians and his two heavy infantry *taxeis*. The extra troops' joining the battle was decisive; the Greeks were surrounded and defeated as described above. Plutarch tells us of a lengthy battle against the mercenaries, and in this could be preserving a hint of the earlier battle against Parmenio that Alexander joined after the defeat of the cavalry.¹¹³

To sum up, I envisage Parmenio and the troops under his command being detached during the night, marching upstream a few miles and crossing so that at dawn the following day he was in a position to attack the Greek mercenaries, or whoever the Persians sent to oppose him, thus fighting the Diodorus 'dry land' battle. Alexander attacked across the river and routed the Persian cavalry, thus fighting the Arrian river crossing; the battle against the mercenaries lasted the longer of the two separate encounters and was still ongoing when Alexander had routed the Persian cavalry. He therefore did not pursue the fleeing Persians, but instead turned his attention to the mercenaries, destroying them at a heavy cost to his indispensable Macedonians. The idea of Alexander using a flanking strategy at every opportunity is again demonstrated here on a grand scale.

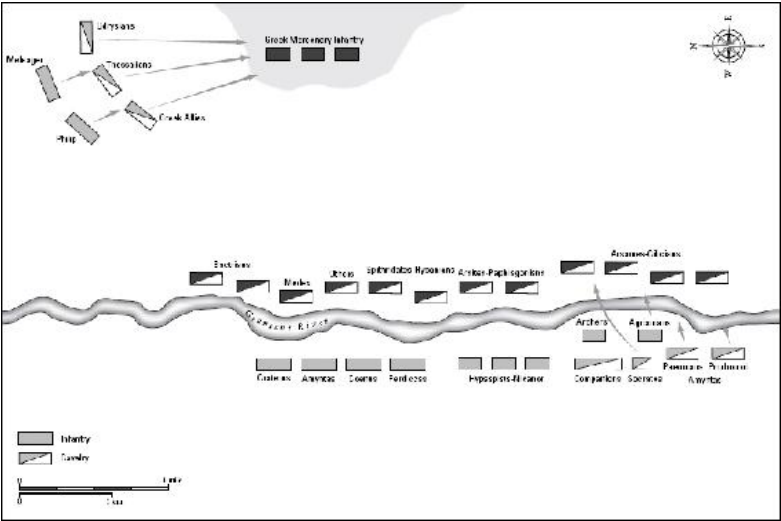
Why do two accounts survive?

We should end this chapter by discussing why each of our sources only gave a part of the whole story, starting with Arrian. It has been argued that Callisthenes may have been the only source to have produced an eyewitness account, and we can be reasonably sure that Callisthenes was Arrian's source for at least the debate with Parmenio.¹¹⁴ Callisthenes is known to have been hostile to Parmenio and is probably the source of the five dialogues between Alexander and the old general that show him as being overly cautious as set against Alexander's youthful heroism. We also know that Arrian used Aristobulus, probably frequently between 1.12.8 and 1.14.4.¹¹⁵ Arrian, of course, also used Ptolemy: key to Ptolemy's account of the battle is his location, if I am correct that the Ptolemy son of Philip mentioned by Arrian is a mistake, either by Arrian or one of his many sources, and this was in fact Ptolemy son of Lagus, then his location precludes him from having any great knowledge of any part of the battlefield other than the area where he fought. Even if the Ptolemy in question was not the historian, it is still likely that he was stationed with the Companion Cavalry on the right and would still have had little or no knowledge of the rest of the battle.

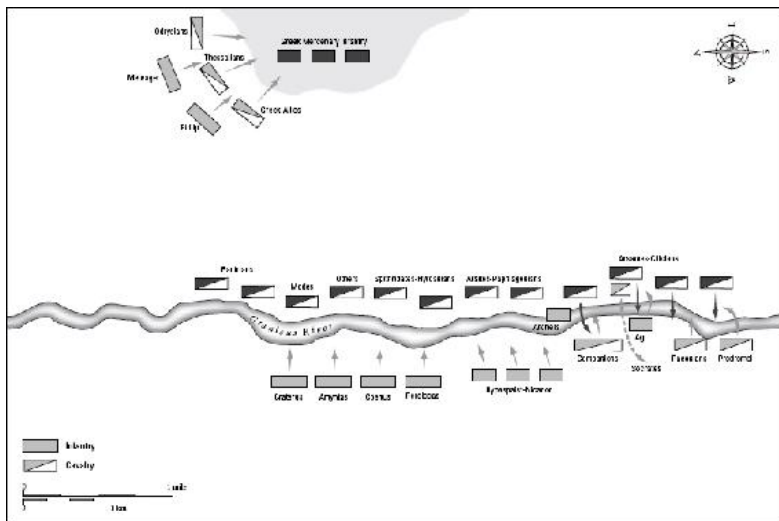
There are a number of mistakes preserved within Arrian's account of the Macedonian order of battle. Socrates is omitted as commander of his own

ile, only to appear in exactly that capacity a few lines later at 1.15.1. Philip the *taxiarch* is mentioned twice, as is Craterus. And given that there is also a second Philip, commander of the allied Greek cavalry (1.14.3), it is not beyond the realms of possibility that Arrian may have made another mistake by making this Ptolemy son of Philip.

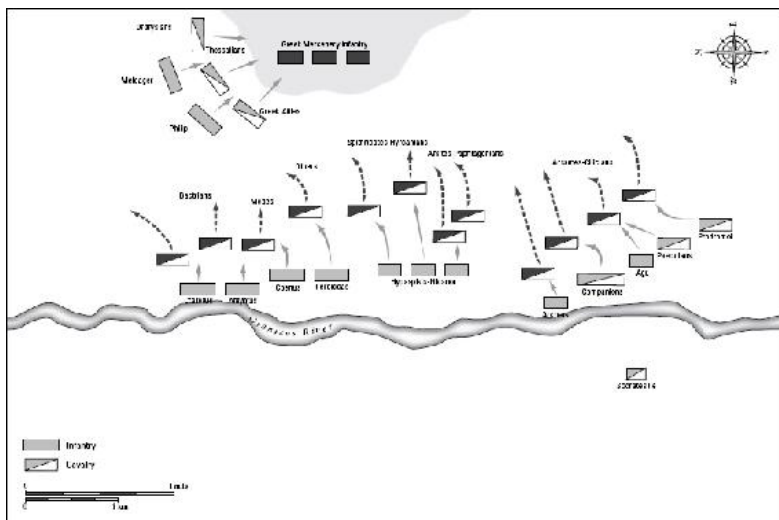
Ptolemy's reliability has often been questioned, especially during the early part of the campaign as he was a junior officer and was not a part of Alexander's inner circle. It is exactly this junior status that makes his account vital to my reconstruction of this battle. It is precisely this junior capacity, along with his location, that led to Arrian's account that ignored the part of the battle in which Ptolemy was not a participant, i.e. that fought on dry land by Parmenio and the Thessalian cavalry. He would also not have access to any meetings that would have taken place between Alexander and the senior commanders both before and after the battle that would have given him full knowledge of events. Further to this, by emphasising the assault across the river he is glorifying not only Alexander's part in the battle, but his own as well.¹¹⁶



3. The Battle of the Granicus River, Phase 1.



4. The Battle of the Granicus River, Phase 2.



5. The Battle of the Granicus River, Phase 3.

Chapter Four

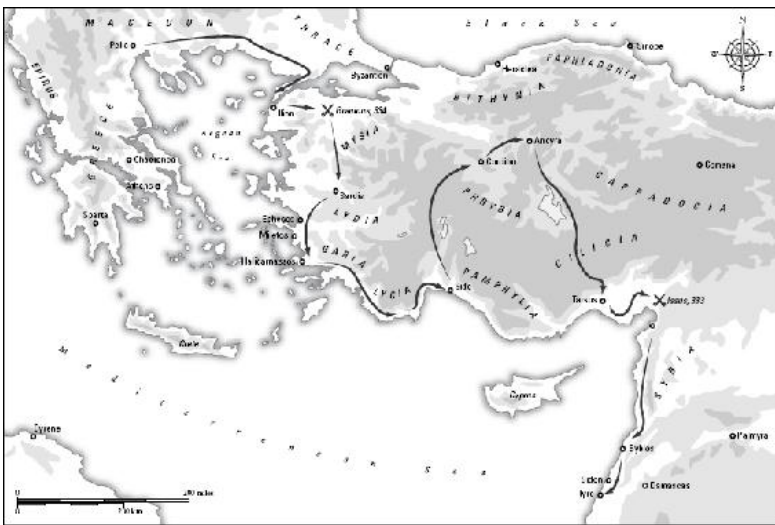
The Campaign of Asia Minor, 334—3

After victory at the Granicus, Alexander did not tarry for long in the region. He appointed his own satrap, Calas, a man who had extensive knowledge of the region having participated in the expeditionary force of Parmenio. Alexander also sent a secondary column to Dascyleum, the regional capital, to accept its surrender and offered amnesty to Zelea who had provided shelter to the Persian army while they waited for Alexander; one imagined that they had little choice. Alexander left Calas with orders to impose the same tax regime the Persians had implemented.

After briefly securing the area, and leaving Calas forces sufficient to complete its pacification, Alexander buried the dead, both Macedonian and Persian, with all of the proper honours. The army turned south and marched towards Sardis. Alexander had chosen not to pursue the defeated Persian nobility, as he could easily have done (an early precursor of his decision after Issus); this was for six main reasons:

1. He felt no need: his victory had been substantial.
2. Many of the Persian nobility had been killed and there would likely be no organized resistance for some time from those surviving.
3. It was unwise to proceed further inland without first securing the coastal areas.
4. He wanted to secure his lines of supply and communication back to Greece.
5. The large and wealthy population centres of Sardis, Miletus and Halicarnassus were very attractive targets.
6. The Persian fleet was a threat and had to be subdued.

Whilst he was still several hours' march from the city he was met by Mithrines, a man who Arrian describes as “the officer in charge of the inner fortress”.¹¹⁷ Mithrines surrendered the fortress and its treasure, a much needed boost to Alexander's desperate financial situation. Luminaries from within the city also came to Alexander and offered their own surrender, all were accepted by Alexander.



6. Alexander's early campaigns.

Alexander delayed in Sardis only long enough to inspect the famous citadel with its triple wall, constructed on a precipitous hill, and to praise Zeus that he had not been forced into what would have been one of the most difficult sieges of his career. Alexander left orders for the construction of a temple in honour of Zeus, and then continued his journey south. Asander, son of Philotas, was left with enough light troops (Argives) and cavalry (presumably allied Greek) to ensure the loyalty of the city and surroundings.

As Alexander marched for Ephesus, news of his victory at the Granicus had preceded him. The mercenary garrison and its commander, a Macedonian called Amyntas, seized control of two triremes and escaped by sea. They were evidently fearful that the fate of the Greek mercenaries at the Granicus awaited them upon Alexander's arrival. The reality was that Alexander probably would not have mistreated the mercenaries if they had surrendered; how he would have dealt with Amyntas is perhaps another matter.

Alexander's arrival seems to have brought with it considerable unrest amongst the populace of Ephesus. The town had not surrendered quite as quickly or unreservedly as Sardis, and Arrian's description seems to hide a certain amount of bloodshed between the old oligarchs who were deposed by democrats supported by Alexander.

While at Ephesus, Alexander accepted the surrender of Magnesia and Tralles, Parmenio again being sent with a column to ensure the security and loyalty of the two cities. Whilst at Ephesus, Alexander continued to accept the surrender of local cities and towns in the region. In almost every case he removed the existing oligarchic governments and installed democracies, not through any love of this form of government, but simply because the

Persians had previously supported the oligarchs.

After a brief pause at Ephesus, Alexander marched on Miletus and then Halicarnassus, successfully besieging both (albeit Halicarnassus was not completely captured until after Alexander had left the region). Before moving on, Alexander took steps to secure the region, he also sent home the recently married men from the army. This would be the last time most of them would ever see Macedonia.

From Halicarnassus, Alexander marched upon Lycia and Pamphylia in order to secure the coast and continue his naval grand strategy of defeating the Persian navy on land by denying it safe harbour. Encountering very little military opposition, Alexander marched into Pisidia and to the vicinity of Termessus; here, Alexander met real resistance. The town was well situated on a precipitous cliff just off the main road through the region. The cliffs upon which the city stood were mirrored on the other side of the road, forming two steep walls of a chasm through which the road ran. A body of locals (likely mercenaries in fact) marched out of the town and occupied the high ground to either side of the road, abandoning the security of the city-walls in the process, but still in a very strong defensive position. Seeing the heights occupied, and realising that to continue to march along the road was inviting disaster, Alexander ordered an immediate halt. Arrian tells us that Alexander speculated that if he made it look as though his troops were bedding down for the night, the enemy would return to the safety of their town and beds. Alexander's tactical insight proved right, as so often. The defenders withdrew the majority of their number to the safety of the city leaving only a small number to secure the heights through the night with the intention of returning the following morning.

Alexander waited for the most opportune moment and then launched his attack; he used the archers, Agrianians and perhaps the hypaspists, and quickly dislodged the defenders, securing the heights with little difficulty. The city was evidently extremely well positioned, and Alexander did not have the patience for what he believed would be a lengthy siege. Arrian tells us that he simply left the city alone and moves on, but this does not fit with every other military encounter of Alexander's career; if he was opposed he reacted with violence. Although we are not told this, I presume that he left some troops behind, including some newly found local allies who were hostile to the Termessians, and proceeded onwards towards Sagalassus.

This incident again demonstrates Alexander's use of cunning and deception; he was not the kind of commander who would simply charge blindly into battle. His encounters were thought out and if he could trick the enemy into a mistake, he was more than willing to do so.

At Sagalassus Alexander again encountered a strongly defended city whose inhabitants had a reputation for being fine soldiers. The defenders again chose to occupy an area of high ground in front of the town, "a

position no less good for defensive action than the wall itself”, there they waited for the Macedonians to move.¹¹⁸ Alexander arrived in the vicinity of the town and assessed the situation. The ground was evidently not mountainous, but was unsuitable for the use of cavalry in some way. Alexander deployed his forces along familiar lines with the infantry occupying the centre ground, the hypaspists commanded by Alexander to their right. No cavalry units are mentioned and we must, therefore, conclude that the terrain was unsuitable for their effective deployment. In a precursor to the screens of light troops Alexander was to deploy at Gaugamela, the Agrianians and archers were positioned in front of the right flank, with the left flank screened by Thracian javelin-men.

Once Alexander's troops were set up, they advanced upon the Pisidian position. When they reached the steepest part of the hillside the defenders launched a daring flanking attack against both of Alexander's wings with men who had evidently been in hiding (or Alexander would have seen the trap and reacted accordingly) waiting for this very opportunity. The archers were leading the assault on the right wing, but were surprised by the trap; being only lightly armed they were unsuited for close combat and suffered badly and broke quickly. The attacking heavy infantry quickly melted away into the surrounding countryside rather than face the Macedonians head on, their purpose having been achieved. The Macedonian heavy infantry, although of superior quality, were unwilling to pursue the Pisidians into territory that they knew well, but that the Macedonians did not; this can only be considered a very wise decision and is also testimony to the discipline and training of the Macedonians. It would have been all too easy to pursue what may have been perceived as a fleeing enemy into unknown terrain.

Alexander gathered together his heavy infantry, and reformed the archers and other light armed and assaulted the city which fell without further difficulty, the Pisidian heavy infantry appear not to have returned to help out the defenders during the brief siege. Alexander followed up this victory with a whirlwind campaign against other Pisidian cities in the region, many all of which either surrendered or were stormed.

Alexander's next target was Phrygia and the stronghold of Celaenae; another well situated fortress with sheer cliffs on all sides and a garrison of 1,000 Carians and 100 mercenaries. The defenders initially, according to Curtius, took refuge on the acropolis and mocked Alexander's threats of dire retribution if they did not surrender, the “deal” only being offered once Alexander began his siege.¹¹⁹ Arrian presents a less aggressive posture from the defenders; they are portrayed as seemingly being in two minds as to whether they should resist; they eventually made Alexander an offer which he rather surprisingly accepted. The defenders were expecting a detachment of reinforcements at a specific date, ten days after the offer was made. The offer was that if those reinforcements failed to materialize then the city would be surrendered without further resistance. Alexander left a force of

1,500 men outside the city under the command of Antigonus “the One-Eyed” and moved on for Gordium. The fact that Alexander accepted the offer rather suggests that Curtius' version is likely exaggerated. Alexander did not have a history of forgiving those who resisted, let alone those who mocked him.

The reinforcements failed to arrive and after the specified ten days the city surrendered. This is the one mention in the whole of Arrian's text of Antigonus, the father of Demetrius the Besieger; likely because Ptolemy and the latter were such bitter enemies during the war of the successors.¹²⁰

After the famous incident with the Gordium Knot, Alexander delayed in the vicinity of the city for perhaps three months (see the following chapter), the surviving narratives do not provide anywhere near enough information as to what he could have been doing for this time, but the delay is likely an indication that the region required far greater pacification than is hinted at in the sources.

Whilst at Gordium, Alexander received a deputation from Athens with a request that he free the Athenian prisoners whom Alexander had taken after victory at the Granicus. These prisoners had been sent back to Macedonia with 2,000 others for a life of hard labour. Whilst the war in Asia Minor was still raging, and rebellion in Greece was a real possibility, Alexander stuck to the edict of the League of Corinth that no Greek should take up arms against another Greek, and he duly rejected the request of the Athenian envoys. He did encourage the Athenians, however, by telling them that they may approach him again on the matter at a more convenient moment. The Athenians were eventually released in 331 when Alexander returned from Egypt and the eastern Mediterranean had been thoroughly subdued.

The threat posed by Memnon, who had recently been made supreme commander of the Persian fleet, had not yet been eliminated, however, and Alexander faced difficult strategic choices: continue campaigning in Asia Minor, and ultimately seek out Darius, or face the threat of Memnon.

Memnon had recently succeeded in capturing the island of Chios, which was betrayed to him. After this victory he sailed to the island of Lesbos and “made himself master of all of the towns in the island except Mitylene, the inhabitants of which refused to treat with him”.¹²¹ Memnon began the siege of Mitylene by building a double stockade which reached to the sea on either side of the port city. In addition to this stockade he built five blockhouses which enabled him to take control of the entire island without difficulty. Memnon, lacking in siege equipment, initially began the siege by investing the city, perhaps with the hope that it would be betrayed into his hands, as at Chios previously. He stationed part of his fleet opposite the harbour of Mitylene, and the remainder near the promontory of Sigrium at the westernmost tip of the island, the usual landing place for merchant vessels from elsewhere in the eastern Aegean.

Alexander appears to have had little intention of turning back to deal with

the clear and present threat posed by Memnon, but he was not oblivious to the threat. Curtius tells us:

Since he had resolved to overtake Darius wherever he might be, in order to leave everything behind him safe he gave Amphoterus command of the fleet at the shore of the Hellespont and Hegelochus of the land forces, in order that these officers might free Lesbos, Cos and Chios from the enemies' garrisons.

The reference to the Hellespontine fleet is of particular interest, as Alexander was supposed to have disbanded his fleet after Halicarnassus. Evidently not all of the fleet was thus disbanded. Curtius continues:

To them 500 talents were given for the expenses of the war, and to Antipater and those who were defending the Greek cities 600 talents were sent, and the allies were ordered, as was provided by their treaty, to furnish ships to guard the Hellespont.

Whilst Memnon was finalising his blockade of Mitylene, and Alexander was endeavouring to reinforce his homeland defence, Memnon fell ill and died suddenly. His loss was the greatest blow to Persian hopes of defeating Alexander in this initial phase of the war. The death was sudden enough that Darius did not have time to appoint a replacement, and Arrian tells us that Memnon handed over interim command to Pharnabazus, Artabazus' son (and Memnon's nephew).

Pharnabazus and Autophradates prosecuted the siege vigorously after Memnon's untimely death. There are two traditions as to what then happened, Diodorus tells us:¹²²

Mitylene, also large and possessed of rich stores of supplies as well as plenty of fighting men, he nevertheless captures with difficulty by assault after a siege of many days and with the loss of many of his soldiers.

Arrian, on the other hand, tells us:¹²³

The people of Mitylene, finding themselves cut off on the landward side of the blockade by a powerful fleet, sent to Pharnabazus and agreed, first, to get rid of the mercenary troops sent to fight for them by Alexander; secondly, to destroy the pillars on which the treaty with Alexander was inscribed (i.e. to rescind the treaty) and enter into alliance with Darius according to the terms of the peace of Antalcidas (also known as the king's peace), and, lastly, to allow their exiles to return and resume possession of half of their original property.

Once the city had been captured, Pharnabazus made for Lycia and Autophradates proceeded to a number of other islands, apparently with the intention of continuing Memnon's aggressive movements against the

Macedonian controlled islands. Whilst these operations were underway, Darius' messenger (Thymondas) reached Pharnabazus with formal orders for him to assume permanent command of that theatre of operations. He also brought orders that all of the mercenaries operating under Pharnabazus' sphere of influence were to be transferred to the mainland without delay. These were transported by sea to Tripoli, after which they marched to Sochi to join up with the Persian host, and later fought at Issus. The removal of these mercenaries from Pharnabazus' command effectively ended any meaningful hopes of the Persians being able to transfer the war to the Greek mainland; it did not end Pharnabazus' ambitions, however.

Although Pharnabazus had been stripped of his mercenary troops, he still commanded a powerful fleet and the sailors that went along with it. Pharnabazus first dispatched 10 ships to the Cycladic islands under the command of Datames, whilst he himself sailed with a fleet of 100 warships to Tenedos. The Persians did not immediately seek to invest the city as Memnon had done at Mitylene, an indication of the lack of ground troops, but instead immediately sent an embassy to the city demanding the inhabitants revoke their agreement with Alexander and the observance of the terms of the Peace of Antalcidas.

Arrian tells us that the inhabitants of Tenedos wanted to remain loyal to Alexander, but they had no hope of relief from Hegelochus' new fleet that Alexander had recently provided the funds for, as it was not yet established, and they feared the consequences if they attempted to and were defeated by the Persians, and thus submitted to Persian rule.¹²⁴

Proteas had been ordered to gather together a Greek fleet from Euboea and the Peloponnese with orders to protect the Greek mainland and the nearby islands. Upon hearing of Datames' ten ships arriving at Siphnos, Proteas sailed at night with fifteen warships of his own to Chalcis on the Euripus. At dawn he reached the island of Cythnus where he remained at anchor throughout the day, partly in order to resupply and partly to gather intelligence on the location of the ten enemy vessels. Once it was established with certainty that Datames was stationed at Siphnos, Proteas set sail before dawn when it was still dark and utterly surprised the Phoenicians, capturing eight of their ten vessels and crews without significant losses. Datames escaped and returned to the larger Persian fleet.

Persian operations continued in the eastern Aegean throughout 333, but they had little impact on the overall war as a lack of ground troops made it difficult to properly siege cities, and Alexander's fleets were gradually being reconstituted. From now on the campaign was to be fought on Persian soil.

After the incident with the Gordium Knot, Alexander set off for Ancyra in Galatia. There he was met by a delegation of Paphlagonians who expressed a strong desire to enter into a treaty with him and begged the young king not to march through their lands. Alexander accepted their terms and left Sabictas,

probably a local chieftain, as governor of the region and continued his march east towards Issus and the inevitable confrontation with Darius.

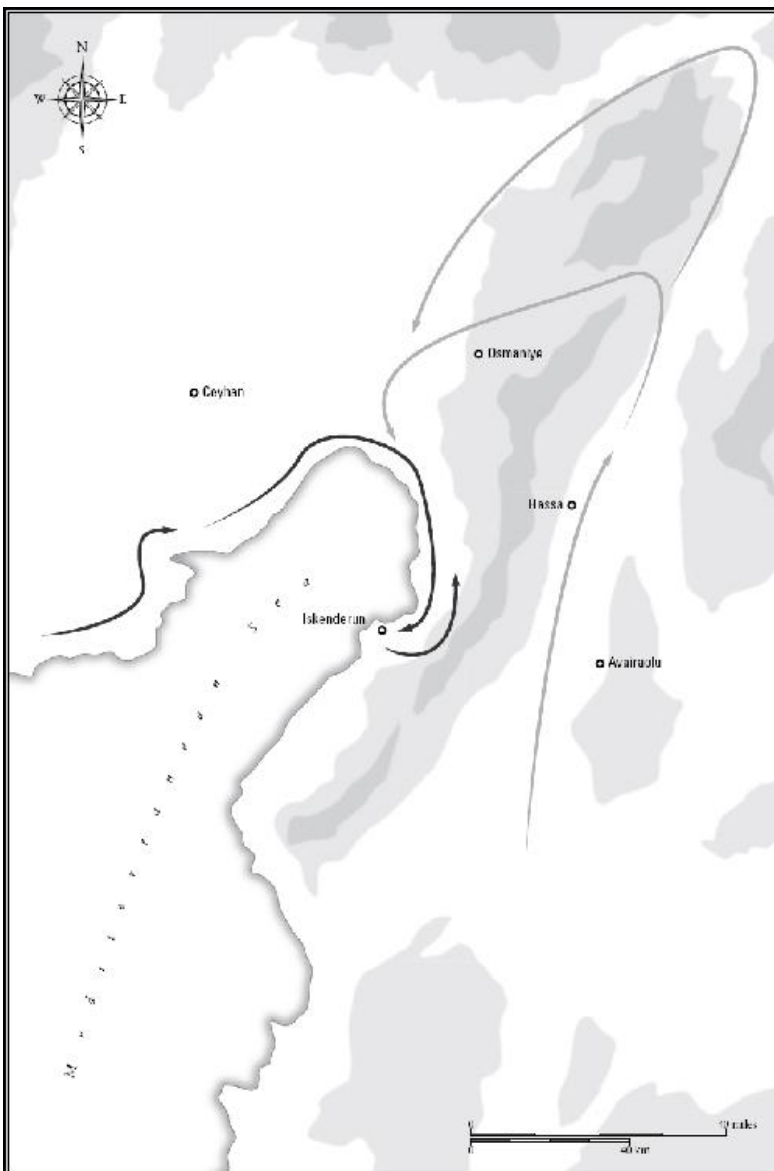
Chapter Five

The Campaign of Issus, 333

The campaign of Issus is described in detail by our sources and presents us with an excellent opportunity to examine the strategies employed by both opposing parties in the lead up to the battle. In order to fully appreciate these strategies, however, we must first discuss the topography of the Cilicia region.

General Topography of Cilicia¹²⁵

Cilicia is encircled on three sides by mountain ranges, and on the fourth by the sea, making access to the central plain difficult if opposed. To the north and west is the Taurus range which forms the boundary with Cappadocia, Lycaonia and Pamphylia. There are four significant passes through the Taurus and northern Amanus Mountains. West of Issus lies the Kara Kapu Pass, and to the north the Kalekoy Pass through the Taurus Mountains. Northeast of the Kalekoy Pass lies the Hasanbayli Pass and just to the north of this is the Bahce Pass over the Amanus Mountains. To the east of the central plain lies the Amanus range, which forms an almost impenetrable barrier, given the scarcity of passes through which any more than a few people could pass. At the southern end of the plain are the “other gates” which Parmenio was initially sent to occupy (see below). These “other gates” consist of the Merkes Su, a pass between the mountains and the sea through which runs a river of the same name. The Pillar of Jonah lies immediately to the south of this and the Beilan Pass lies 16km southeast of Iskanderun, which itself is a little to the east of the Pillar of Jonah. The Beilan Pass leads over the high central areas of the Amanus Mountains leading away from the coast. The plain of Cilicia was “proverbially fertile” and was a major contributor to the Achaemenid treasury.¹²⁶ The fertility of the plain, along with the proximity to the sea, meant that Alexander would not have to worry about his supply lines for a little while.



7. Initial movements up to the Battle of Issus.

Whilst at Tarsus Alexander fell seriously ill: the result of a swim in the freezing waters of the Cyndus River. The illness apparently incapacitated him for several weeks, and was only cured after Philip the Acarnanian, Alexander's court physician, administered a drastic purge. This was despite a letter of warning from Parmenio that Philip had been bribed by Darius to poison the young king. The historicity of the letter can be questioned on the grounds that it has Parmenio still in camp at the time. In all likelihood, Parmenio had already been sent south to occupy the passes out of Cilicia

(see below).¹²⁷ In fact, the army had probably been divided as it passed through the Cilician Gates, Alexander taking a small contingent to Tarsus with Parmenio taking most of the rest south. There would have been little opportunity after the forcing of the pass to have organized such a division, especially if Alexander's illness was as serious as seems to be indicated in our sources. The exact chronology of Parmenio's mission is difficult, but important in understanding the overall strategy of the campaign. Diodorus tells us that he was sent out as news was received that Darius was only a few days away. This simply cannot be true, as it would seem that Parmenio spent several weeks, perhaps a month, in Cilicia before returning to Castabalum to report to Alexander.¹²⁸

Once Alexander had recovered his health, after an unspecified delay, he marched southwest to Anchialus and Soli, where he installed a garrison and levied a fine of 200 silver talents upon the inhabitants for their loyalty to Persia. Whilst at Soli Alexander took three *taxeis* of heavy infantry, the Agrianians and archers, and conducted a seven-day campaign against hill tribesmen in the so called "Rough Cilicia" region, some of these he drove from their positions, and some surrendered. Alexander at this point was evidently not worried about the location of Darius.

Upon his return to Soli, Alexander first learned of the fall of the final two citadels of Halicarnassus; the defenders had held out admirably with the support of the Persian navy, but their efforts were not enough to maintain their independence indefinitely.

At Soli, Alexander also further divided the army: Philotas, with the cavalry, was sent on to the river Pyramus, through the Aleian plain. Alexander himself marched to Magarsus with the hypaspists and the *agema* of Companions. Magarsus submitted without incident and was treated rather better than Soli, having no fine levied at all, no doubt because it was a strategically more sensitive area. Alexander then marched northeast to Mallus. It was while Alexander was encamped at Mallus that he received news that Darius was two days march away at Sochi.¹²⁹ Before we discuss the immediate and future strategy of the two armies we must solidify the timeline and discuss the general topography of the region.

We know that Parmenio was sent south, before Alexander occupied Tarsus, to capture the Issus plain and the passes leading out of Cilicia to the south, specifically the Pillar of Jonah and the Beilan Pass: but we must now establish the timeline for Darius' arrival at Sochi and his occupation of the aforementioned southern passes. This is no easy task given that none of our sources actually synchronize Alexander's movements with those of Darius. We know from Curtius that the Persian contingents from the furthest parts of the empire were not summoned because of Darius' great haste. No source gives a date for Darius' march from Babylon, but Curtius mentions that Darius only decided to fight in person once he received news of Memnon's

death. We know that Memnon died whilst besieging Mytilene; this is likely to have been mid-summer 333, and we should allow until the end of July for news to reach Darius at Babylon. This would be a reasonably short period of time, but plausible, given that news could be carried by sea to the Phoenician coast, and then quickly by land to Babylon.¹³⁰ Darius had to cover around 966km from Babylon to Sochi with a very large army and huge baggage train in tow. We have no data on the Persian rate of march, but we do know that Alexander's whole army marched from Babylon to Susa (similar terrain as that from Babylon to Sochi) at a rate of 19.8kmpd.¹³¹ If Darius marched at the same rate this would mean covering 966km in 49 days. Darius' army was, however, rather larger and vastly more encumbered than Alexander's. He had with him a part of the royal treasury, his family, harem and huge numbers of perhaps camp followers. We should, therefore, assume a slower march rate of 15kmpd. If this were the case then Darius' army would cover the ground to Sochi in 64 days, or approximately two months.¹³² If Darius marched out immediately upon hearing of the death of Memnon, therefore, he would have arrived at Sochi at approximately the end of September.

Using the end of September as the time of Darius' arrival at Sochi we can continue the process begun earlier and further establish the Macedonian timeline. We know that the battle occurred on the sixth day after Alexander received news that Darius was at Sochi. Day one, Alexander at Mallus heard Darius was at Sochi. Day two, Alexander set out. Day three, Alexander passed "the gates" and arrived at Myriandrus. Day four, bad weather; day five, news of Darius behind Alexander; day six, the battle was fought. The campaign in Cilicia could conceivably have lasted for around four weeks from the time he left Tarsus, until he heard of Darius' presence at Sochi. This, however, leaves four months un - accounted for on the part of the Macedonians.¹³³

There are two possible solutions to this problem: either that Alexander's illness was far more serious than we know, and his recovery was in fact a period of several months; or that Alexander paused at Gordium for longer than we had previously believed, no doubt being worried about the progress of Persian operations in the Aegean. The reality is probably some combination of the two; at this stage Alexander seems not to have been in a hurry.

Location of Key Sites

It is important and interesting to note that the locations of a number of key locations mentioned so frequently in the sources are far from certain. The exact locations of Issus and Myriandrus are uncertain, and the location of Sochi is entirely unknown. We can make certain assumptions, however. Issus was probably very near the head of the gulf; it is also probably quite

close to the river across which the battle was fought, the main contenders for which are only 11km apart. In both Curtius and Arrian, Issus was the first place reached by Darius after crossing the Kalekoy Pass and arriving on Alexander's lines of communication.¹³⁴ It can be reasonably assumed, therefore, that Issus lies directly south of the pass and on the coast. It is also probably quite close to the Pinarus River, given the name of the ensuing battle, assuming the battle was fought across that river, that is. The most useful piece of source evidence for the location of Issus comes from Xenophon; he states that the distance between Issus and the "Gates between Cilicia and Syria" is five parasangs.¹³⁵ One parasang (a Persian unit of measurement) is 30 stades; this gives a total of 150 stades or 26.15km.

The locations of Myriandrus and Sochi are more problematic. Myriandrus can be assumed to be on the coast, as Alexander dispatched a ship from there upon hearing of Darius in his rear. An approximate location of Sochi first involves an identification of the pass known as the "Syrian Gates". We already know that Parmenio was sent south with half of the army to capture and guard the "other gates which divide the land of the Cilicians from that of the Assyrians".¹³⁶ There are two passes to the south of the Issus plain that fit this general description, referred to by modern scholars as the Pillar of Jonah and the Beilan Pass. The Pillar of Jonah is a narrow coastal defile about 9.66km south of Iskanderon. The Beilan Pass leads across the Amanus Mountains and away from the coast (today this pass carries the main road between Iskanderon, Antioch and Aleppo); it is around 14.5km southeast of Iskanderon.

Arrian's narrative is extremely vague about these passes, and we can conclude that he in fact knew of only one of them. He states at 2.6.1 that Darius was encamped at Sochi, two days march from the Syrian Gates; at 2.6.2 he tells us that Alexander passed the "gates" and made camp at Myriandrus. As the Beilan Pass is southeast of the presumed approximate location of Myriandrus then the pass referred to in Arrian must be the Pillar of Jonah.

The strategic decisions of both sides were greatly affected, not only by the passes to the south of Issus, but by those to the northeast as well. When Darius took the decision to move north and circle in behind Alexander, he had to cross the Amanus Mountains somewhere. The modern road and rail network in the region probably gives us some important pointers as to where these passes were. There are a large number of narrow shepherds' passes over the Amanus range, but only two passes are large enough to take an army through in relatively short time and in good order; these are the Hasanbeyli Pass and the Bahce Pass. The Hasanbeyli Pass, the more southerly of the two, carries the modern road over the mountains, whilst the Bahce Pass carries the Baghdad railway. Both of these passes are at a height of around 1,200m; we do not know which pass Darius used, and it could easily have been either one (or likely both to get such a large force across the

mountains quickly). To reach the plain of Issus, Darius must have also moved through a smaller pass, the Kalekoy Pass, to cross the eastern spur of the Misis Dag and the western spur of the Gavur Dag ranges. This is a relatively minor range of mountains by the standards of the region, but significant enough to have diverted the modern road and rail links from Adana and Ceyhan to Iskenderon, through the Kalekoy Pass. Most modern authorities associate the Kalekoy Pass with the Amanid Gates, largely because of a reference in Curtius. I am more convinced, however, by the argument that the pass in question was the Toprakkale Pass, as the Amanid Gates would surely lead over the Amanus range.¹³⁷

Some key distance data are also critical; the most important being those from Mallus to Myriandrus, which Alexander covered in a reported two days. Also from Sochi to Issus, and then to the Pinarus River, a distance that Darius covered in an unspecified length of time. The distance between Mallus and Myriandrus is impossible to know with any degree of certainty, given that the precise location of both is uncertain. The general location of both can be approximated from the ancient evidence and a distance of around 120km seems reasonable.¹³⁸ Alexander was, therefore, clearly moving with considerable alacrity when he covered this distance in 48 hours.¹³⁹ Sochi to Issus, the route travelled by Darius, would also be around 120km; the Hasanbeyli and the Beilan Passes would also have to be crossed *en route*, however. Given that Darius had sent his baggage train south to Damascus, only the most mobile elements of the army remained; but given the passes that needed to be traversed, we can perhaps assume 72 hours or so for this distance. The Pinarus River is only around 8km from Issus, so this last stage of the journey would not have taken the Persians long at all.

Initial Movements – Darius

When Darius arrived at Sochi, he was in an ideal position to take advantage of his superior numbers. This was a battle site of his own choosing, consisting of wide open, level ground; a position that would have allowed him to encircle the much smaller Macedonian army and to use his superior cavalry numbers to their greatest advantage. This alone would not have guaranteed victory, however, given that this is what occurred at Gaugamela and Darius was still defeated.

Why would Darius abandon such an ideal position in order to fight a battle in a narrow, hilly plain enclosed on all sides by natural barriers? The sources are almost unanimous in their assertion that Darius grew impatient at Alexander's refusal to come to him, delays that were in fact due to Alexander's illness and his campaign in southwest Cilicia. The delays caused Darius to conclude that Alexander would not come to meet him; Curtius even has Darius describe Alexander as a coward, despite the best advice of

Amyntas, his Greek mercenary commander.¹⁴⁰ Arrian tells us that the worst counsel prevailed, telling Darius what he wanted to hear. Curtius gives us a rather different version of events at the Persian court at this time. He describes a debate not with Amyntas as in Arrian, but with Thymondas, son of Mentor.¹⁴¹ The subject of the debate, according to Curtius, was whether or not to divide the army, a theme that appears in neither Arrian nor Plutarch. Curtius and Diodorus both describe an earlier debate in Babylon, in which the Athenian mercenary, Charidemus, advocated such a division of forces, and was executed for his overzealousness.¹⁴² The argument must have occurred at Sochi rather than Babylon, as a division of forces there would mean the two elements would have had to travel virtually the same 966km route to arrive in the region: a division of forces, if such a thing was to happen, would have been far more logically undertaken at Sochi where one half could head southwest, the other north, to trap Alexander in a pincer in Cilicia.

It could never have been Alexander's intention to end his campaign against the Persian Empire in Cilicia as this would have left a "front" of over 1,500km with an enemy that had not been defeated in battle, and who could bring almost limitless reserves against him, given enough time. It would also mean that Alexander would not have had the opportunity to fight a battle against Darius himself.

The key factor in Darius' decision to advance into Cilicia was, perhaps, knowledge of Alexander's illness. Plutarch tells us that Darius had no knowledge of it, but Curtius tells us that he did know, but his timing was impossible as he then goes on to tell us that news of the illness made him march to the Euphrates as swiftly as his heavily burdened army would allow. This must be a mistake of Curtius. Alexander could not have fallen ill as early as this, i.e. several weeks before Darius even reached Sochi. Darius' move into Cilicia perhaps suggests that Darius did know of Alexander's illness, though not as early as Curtius claims (although I can not say why Plutarch thought otherwise).¹⁴³

Darius was in a strong position at Sochi, a position that was suited to his superiority in numbers, especially in cavalry, so why would he suddenly abandon it to enter Cilicia? The very fact that he did this (it was partly down to logistics too) I believe suggests that Curtius is correct that Darius knew of Alexander's illness and was attempting to gain a major tactical advantage by advancing while the Macedonians were effectively leaderless. If Alexander's illness turned out to be fatal, then Darius would encounter a headless enemy, which could easily be driven from Persian territory. By the time he reached Issus, he would have learned that Alexander had recovered, so he tried to make the best of his ill fortune and selected the most suitable place in Cilicia to fight a set-piece battle. Thus Darius' decision to march into Cilicia was sound, only failing because the news of Alexander's illness was out of date by the time it reached him. On this interpretation, Curtius is right to hold that

Darius knew of Alexander's illness, but is wrong regarding the timing.

This argument is, I believe, supported by the fact that, whilst at Sochi, Darius sent his baggage train 320km south to Damascus.¹⁴⁴ This is virtually beyond doubt given that it is in all of our sources; the decision was no doubt taken to make the Persian host more mobile, so that it could cross the northern passes quickly and come to terms with the Macedonians whilst they were disadvantaged by Alexander's illness or, hopefully, death.

The whole question of the actions of both sides in the days leading up to the battle rests largely upon whether Darius knew of Alexander's illness. His delay at Sochi potentially suggests that he did not have early knowledge, but once he found out he chose to move. In all probability, until the time he arrived at Mallus, Alexander would have known nothing at all of Darius' movements. If he did know, then he would not have undertaken his campaign in southwest Cilicia; he would instead have made straight for a more strategically and fundamentally important battle against the Persian Great King.

We can presume that Alexander was reasonably well informed of Darius' movements from Parmenio in the south; but what of Darius' intelligence? The inhabitants of the region of Cilicia were not Greek, and thus had no particular reason to welcome Alexander. Both Diodorus and Curtius tell us that the locals were not enthusiastic about Alexander's presence and were loyal to the Great King. Arrian also takes this line, telling us that Alexander fined the inhabitants of Soli 200 silver talents because of their continued inclination towards the Persian cause, as noted earlier. Persian supporters in Soli could easily have travelled by boat to the Orontes River to report Alexander's activities to Darius. Coastal towns no doubt had significant fishing fleets; we know that Alexander later had no difficulty in finding a ship at Myriandrus to verify Darius' position behind him.¹⁴⁵

From Darius' point of view at Sochi, he would have known that Alexander was conducting a campaign with part of his force in 'Rough Cilicia'. He would also have learned from the guards he had posted at the southern passes that Parmenio had moved south to occupy those passes, also with a considerable force. From the guards he probably posted at the northern passes, he would have received no information about troop movements on the part of the Macedonians. These three key pieces of information would have led Darius to conclude that Alexander's forces were divided roughly in two; and that, if he acted quickly, he had an opportunity to drive a wedge between them. It is entirely likely, therefore, that Darius intended to cut the Macedonian army in half and deal with the two separate elements individually.¹⁴⁶ If this strategy of Darius is correct, the only way it had a chance of success is if he marched with the utmost speed. The theory is supported by two pieces of evidence: first that Darius dispatched his baggage train south to Damascus; this would have been the part of the army that

would most encumber him and prevent a lightning march. Secondly, Plutarch tells us of Darius making a night march, the march in which the two armies passed each other during the hours of darkness. The story of the two armies missing each other narrowly during the night is very dubious; the armies were separated by 48km and a mountain range. The idea of the Persians making a night march need not be automatically rejected.

There are other motivations for Darius' decision to advance into the Cilician plain: the first is that Darius was a significant military figure in his own right, and thus would not be prepared to wait too long for a numerically inferior opponent. This is sound enough, but if Darius was indeed a talented commander then he would surely have realized that his best chance of success was on a wide open plain, such as he chose initially, and then chose again at Gaugamela. The second reason is more significant: Darius may have been running short of supplies.¹⁴⁷ The grand army had been in the field for some months, crossing land that was not known for its fertility. Alexander on the other hand could be supplied from the sea, assuming the Persian navy did not take steps to attempt a blockade. Darius therefore took this opportunity to bring an end to the perceived stalemate.

Once Darius had made the decision to advance into Cilicia, he had to move with extreme haste. It was imperative, if the plan was to succeed, that he reach the plain of Issus via the Kalekoy Pass before Alexander reached it via the Kara Kapu Pass: this need for haste is precisely why Plutarch has Darius making a night march.

Plutarch gives us a piece of information which tends to be ignored, but perhaps supports the theory of Darius attempting to catch Alexander unawares; he states "During the night they missed one another and both turned back". We know that both armies conducted a night march, and we will see Alexander turning his army around; but apparently Darius also tried to turn back. Plutarch goes on to say "Darius was no less eager to extricate his forces from the mountain passes and regain his former camping ground in the plain".¹⁴⁸

These passages from Plutarch would tend to support the theory that Darius intended to drive a wedge between the two elements of Alexander's army; realizing that he had been too slow, however, he wished to recover his former position at Sochi, but was unable as Alexander brought him to battle rapidly from that point. Darius' innovative strategy had failed, perhaps only by a few hours.

Darius took out his frustration at failing to split the Macedonians in two upon the Macedonian field hospital at Issus, mutilating those whom Alexander had left behind.¹⁴⁹ Darius realized that he could not safely retreat to Sochi by retracing his steps over the mountains because of the possibility of the Macedonians attacking him as he withdrew, perhaps with a part of the army already across the pass and unable to intervene. He also knew that he

could not reach Sochi by moving south through the Issus plain because of Alexander's presence there. Darius set about finding the most suitable place to conduct a battle given the composition of his army. He would have also realized at this point that, despite the failure of his strategy, he still lay in a very good position, across the lines of supply and communication of the Macedonians. With this in mind, the day after the massacre at Alexander's field hospital, Darius moved south from Issus and made preparations on the banks of the Pinarus River. Upon hearing Darius was at Issus, Alexander dispatched a select few of his Companions and a ship from Myriandrus to verify the report; that done he simply turned his army around and made for the river: this, as so frequently noted, is a fine example of the discipline of the Macedonian army.¹⁵⁰

Before going on to discuss the battle itself, there is one final element of the preliminary movements of the protagonists that we must examine: why did Alexander move south of the Pillar of Jonah? Why did he not remain in the plain of Issus to await Darius? In the sources we have, as we did at the Granicus, two entirely different accounts of Alexander's strategy. Arrian presents the campaign as purely offensive. Curtius, on the other hand, has Alexander adopting a defensive posture, essentially on the advice of Parmenio, just prior to the battle.¹⁵¹ On this reading, we have two mutually incompatible accounts, but I believe that this is the case only if the account of Arrian is misinterpreted. Arrian presents Alexander as moving to Myriandrus, at which point he would move to engage Darius at Sochi. Curtius, likewise, has Alexander move south of the Pillar of Jonah, out of the plain of Issus and into the much smaller area called the plain of Myriandrus, an area enclosed by mountains and passes on all sides, specifically the Pillar of Jonah to the north and the Beilan Pass to the east.

Arrian tells us:¹⁵²

He (Alexander) at once called a meeting of his staff and told them this important news (that Darius was still at Sochi). They urged unanimously an immediate advance. Alexander thanked them and dismissed the meeting, and on the following day moved forward with the evident intention of attack. Two days later he took up a position at Myriandrus, and during the night there was a storm of such violent wind and rain that he was compelled to remain where he was, with no chance of breaking camp.

There are several problems: firstly, if Alexander intended to move against Darius at Sochi, why would he continue southwest to Myriandrus after passing the Pillar of Jonah? Why not travel southeast to the Beilan Pass? The storm that caused the delay is also puzzling; there is no hint of a storm in any of the other sources, and no hint in Arrian that the storm delayed the progress of the Persians, who had to cover in excess of 130km from Sochi to Issus via the northern passes in a very short period of time.¹⁵³ The storm

could well be an apologetic fiction used by Arrian to delay Alexander and allow Darius to appear behind him, essentially covering up the fact that Alexander was conducting a defensive campaign, as presented in Curtius. Alexander in fact had no intention of being drawn into a battle on Darius' terms. As in almost all of his campaigns, the battle was to be fought on ground of Alexander's choosing. Alexander, therefore, moved towards Myriandrus because it was far more defensible than the Issus plain; it was far smaller, and Myriandrus was closer to the key passes to the east and west than Issus was to the passes to the north and south. A camp at Myriandrus, therefore, could easily defend the plain.

Plain of Issus

Correctly identifying the location of the Pinarus River is important but not critical to our understanding the battle. The rivers in that region appear similar enough that whichever one is correct, the battle would have occurred along more or less the same lines; an attempt must still be made, however, at a correct identification. We must bear in mind, of course, that the rivers in the area have changed their courses many times over the centuries. Polybius, whilst criticising the account of Callisthenes, gives us the most detailed description of the battlefield.¹⁵⁴ Callisthenes tells us that the plain of the battlefield was fourteen stades from the coast to the foothills of the Amanus Mountains, and that the river flowed at right angles to both, which is to say it flowed down from the foothills and directly towards the sea. Callisthenes also tells us that the river was difficult to cross, possessing precipitous banks along the whole of its length. Polybius tells us that Alexander was 100 stades from Darius when he learned of the latter's presence on the plain. Polybius further noted Callisthenes' statement that Alexander made an approach march of 40 stades in extended order.¹⁵⁵ Curtius adds the information that, on the approach march to the battle, Alexander reoccupied the coastal ravines known as the Cilician Gates, usually referred to here as the Pillar of Jonah. Diodorus also gives us an approach march of 30 stades, and unhelpfully adds that Alexander pursued Darius for 200 stades after the battle.¹⁵⁶ Historians have drawn three conclusions from these data as to the identification of the Pinarus River. One of the earliest concerted attempts to identify the river identified it with the modern Payas.¹⁵⁷ The Payas runs about 20km north of Iskanderun; it also fulfils the criteria of possessing steep banks, and the plain upon which it sits is narrow, approximately 4km wide, corresponding approximately with Callisthenes' stated width of 14 stades.

This theory can be rejected on two main grounds, the first that there is no room for the 40 stade approach march made by Alexander and described in Callisthenes; 40 stades south of the Payas would place Alexander still well within the coastal defiles of the Cilician Gates, an area that he had cleared by

the time the march began. The second is that at no point along the banks of the Payas does the topography allow for the cavalry charge mentioned in Arrian.¹⁵⁸

Another possible location of the Pinarus was an almost entirely topographically based theory; it suggests the river is the Deli Cay, 11km north of the Payas. This river does indeed fit many of the topographical criteria; it is suitable for Arrian's cavalry charge and the banks are generally not steep and easily negotiable by infantry. The ground south of the river would also allow the 40 stade approach march, roughly 7.4km.

This cannot be the river, however, as it is 31km north of Iskanderon, which itself is no doubt situated well to the north of the ancient Myriandrus, if Xenophon is in any way reliable.¹⁵⁹ The Deli Cay, moreover, does not correspond to Callisthenes' description of the river; its banks are far too smooth. A certain positive identification can never be reached, but we should make one final note; none of our sources describe the Pinarus as the largest river in the Issus plain and therefore other, lesser streams need to be considered. The Kuru Cay, for example, 3km north of the Payas, fits the description of having precipitous banks in places, but also being suitable for a cavalry charge in others.¹⁶⁰ However, any conclusion based upon modern topography is automatically flawed because of the changing nature of the rivers in the area, as noted above.

The Battle of Issus

Once Darius had advanced to the plain of Issus, taking up a position at the Pinarus River, Arrian presents us with a picture of Alexander being shocked and not believing in his scouting reports. When the reality of these reports had been established, Alexander made a speech, as he frequently did, to exhort the troops before advancing:¹⁶¹

Remember that already danger has often threatened you and you have looked it triumphantly in the face; this time the struggle will be between a victorious army and an enemy already once vanquished. God himself, moreover, by suggesting to Darius to leave the open ground and cram his great army into a confined space, has taken charge of operations on our behalf. We ourselves shall have room enough to deploy our infantry, while they, no match for us either in bodily strength or resolution, will find their superiority in numbers of no avail. Our enemies are Medes and Persians, men who for centuries have lived soft and luxurious lives; we of Macedon for generations past have been trained in the hard school of danger and war. Above all, we are free men, and they are slaves. There are Greek troops to be sure, in Persian service, but

how different is their cause from ours! They will be fighting for pay, and not much of it at that; we on the contrary, shall fight for Greece, and our hearts will be in it. As for our foreign troops – Thracians, Paeonians, Illyrians, Agrianes – they are the best and stoutest soldiers in Europe, and they will find as their opponents the slackest and softest of the tribes of Asia. And what, finally, of the two men in supreme command? You have Alexander, they Darius!

The historicity of the speech, as with all of the other pre-battle speeches, has been much discussed.¹⁶² There are likely enough similarities between the various versions of the speech to suggest a common source, probably Ptolemy. Despite the likelihood of a common, original source, it seems highly unlikely that Alexander would have presented the Persians, at this time, as cowards, as he does in both Arrian and Curtius, and why Ptolemy should wish to portray them as such seems equally puzzling.¹⁶³ We may conclude that, although the speech came from Ptolemy, it probably did not come ultimately from the mouth of Alexander.

Once Alexander had addressed the troops, he began the movement towards the Persians. The advance occurred in three stages: initially an advance force of cavalry and archers was sent to secure the coastal defiles, the route by which Alexander would have to return to the Pinarus, while the rest of the army was instructed to eat a meal and rest in preparation for the coming battle while Alexander himself climbed a nearby high ridge and made sacrifice to the local deities.¹⁶⁴

Alexander's first order was that his men should eat, while at the same time he sent a small party of mounted men and archers to the narrow pass by the shore to reconnoitre the road by which he would have to return; then, as soon as it was dark, he moved off with the whole army to take possession once more of the narrow gateway.

The second stage, as described above, occurred after nightfall: Alexander and the remaining elements of the army moved to occupy the “narrow gateway”, presumably the Pillar of Jonah. The passage was secured around midnight, and the men were allowed to rest for the remainder of the night. The rest cannot have been terribly comfortable as Arrian describes the terrain as being particularly rocky. Alexander also posted sentries in outposts lest the Persians attempt a night attack. This was an unlikely prospect, but Alexander was perfectly wise to defend against it just in case.

The third stage of the advance began at the third trumpet call, just before dawn, the following morning; the whole army marched in column along the coast road. Curtius tells us:¹⁶⁵

at daybreak they came to the narrow place which they had decided to hold. Those who had been sent ahead reported that Darius was thirty stadia distant from there. Then Alexander ordered a halt, and

having armed himself arranged his order of battle.

As the army advanced out of the foothills, and as space began to open up, the frontage was gradually extended as heavy infantry were brought up, one *taxis* at a time until the Macedonian right was touching the foothills to the east and the left of the line was touching the sea coast. It is evident from Polybius' description that Alexander placed his heavy infantry at the head of the column with the cavalry and other infantry units further back.¹⁶⁶ This may be seen as something of a departure from the normal order of march with lighter, more mobile troops at the front. We hear no mention of the hypaspists or Agrianians during this stage of the advance through broken ground, indicating that Alexander may have expected to be attacked while on the march. He was far from certain that Darius would actually wait for him at the Pinarus, and so he had to prepare for that eventuality. As the heavy infantry entered the plain, the infantry was able to deploy in battle array, at first thirty-two ranks deep, thinning to sixteen and finally eight ranks.¹⁶⁷

Macedonian Order of Battle

Alexander's primary tactical problem was how to effect a central penetration of the Persian line without being outflanked; a problem that was central to every one of Alexander's set-piece battles, particularly given that he was consistently greatly outnumbered. The solution on the left flank was made easier by the presence of the sea. Parmenio, initially with only the Allied Greek cavalry, was given strict orders that he was:¹⁶⁸

on no account to leave a gap between his extreme left and the sea; for if he did, they might well be surrounded, as the numerically superior of the enemy would certainly enable them to outflank the Macedonians.

The heavy infantry was, as always, deployed in the centre according to a strictly adhered-to code of honour. The greatest position of honour, on the right of the heavy infantry, was occupied as always by the hypaspists, under Nicanor, son of Parmenio. Following these from right to left were the *taxeis* of Coenus, Perdikkas, Meleager, Ptolemy (son of Seleucus), Amyntas, and Craterus on the left, next to Parmenio's cavalry.¹⁶⁹ At the initial stage of disposition, the Thessalian cavalry, the Companion Cavalry, the Paeonians and the *prodromoi* were all deployed to the right of the hypaspists, along with Alexander himself. This would indicate that Alexander planned a massive cavalry strike from that area towards the Persian centre, a strategy that was not at all original, but the size of the force was. Positioning so much of the cavalry force, some 4,500 men, to the right, left Parmenio dangerously undermanned on the extreme left, commanding as he did only around 600 cavalry, a problem that Alexander would realize and rectify later. To the

extreme right of the army were positioned the Agrianians and archers, along with some unspecified cavalry unit, as a precaution to protect the right flank from the few Persian troops that had been stationed in the foothills of the Amanus Mountains.

The strength of the Macedonian army at Issus was very similar to that at the Granicus; there were, however, two new missile units, the Thessalian javelin-men and the Cretan archers. The Greek allied troops and the Greek mercenaries are not mentioned during the battle, and were perhaps used as a second line, much as will be seen at Gaugamela, or, more likely, were left to guard the Pillar of Jonah and other key strategic points in the region. Alexander's front line strength at Issus was around 5,100 cavalry and 14,000 infantry.¹⁷⁰

Certain conclusions can be drawn from Alexander's initial dispositions: that he intended a defensive action on his left seems clear; Parmenio was not given enough troops to do anything else. That the main thrust of the attack was to come in the form of the cavalry on the right seems equally clear. The heavy infantry were stationed in the centre as usual, but we can not speculate upon their orders simply from their positioning. They could be intended to be offensive or defensive, only time would indicate their true purpose. The initial dispositions, then, were very similar to every one of Alexander's set-piece battles; there appeared little innovation at this point.

Persian Order of Battle

By the time Alexander arrived on the battlefield, Darius had already deployed his troops. His dispositions strongly indicate that he had a well developed tactical position. Darius evidently had studied Alexander's dispositions at the Granicus, and expected Alexander to deploy in much the same way. To counter the central strength of the Macedonian heavy infantry, he deployed his Greek mercenary troops in the centre, under the command of Thymondas whom Darius had recalled from the Aegean to take this command.¹⁷¹ The Greek mercenaries were stationed along a stretch of banks between 500m and 1.6km from the coast. In this area the banks were steep enough to remove the possibility of attack from cavalry.¹⁷² Deploying Greek mercenary troops in this area was tactically very sound indeed. The steep banks would make an assault by cavalry impossible, and would severely disrupt an advance by the Macedonian heavy infantry. Adding to the defensive strength he created several abatis, essentially temporary defensive palisades, at the most vulnerable points. Arrian and Curtius, following Callisthenes, both give the strength of the Greek mercenary force at 30,000, but given their location this must be a serious overestimate.¹⁷³ They were stationed opposite the hypaspists and *pezhetairoi*, which themselves numbered 12,000, and as they did not seriously overlap the Macedonians we

can assume that, if their depth was the same as their opponents', their numbers would have been similar. Although we must note that there is no indication in any of the sources as to what their depth actually was, it could be that they were 16 or 20 deep which would put their numbers at 24,000–30,000.

There is considerable disagreement in the sources regarding the Persian order of battle, particularly with regard to the infantry. Arrian shows little interest in the minutiae of the Persian line-up, apart from the front line, and those troops that Darius posted in the foothills to the extreme left of his line. With the exception of these troops Arrian makes specific reference only to the Greek mercenary infantry and to the Cardaces, whom he describes as hoplites, clearly believing them to be heavy infantry. Arrian states clearly that the Cardaces were stationed to either side of the Greek mercenaries and numbered 60,000. Callisthenes, however, tells us equally clearly that the Persians drew up their cavalry next to the sea with the Greek mercenaries next to them, a group of peltasts to their left stretching all the way to the Amanus Mountains.¹⁷⁴

Given the limitations of space in the plain, and the large mass of cavalry by the seashore, it seems highly unlikely that Arrian could be correct that the Cardaces were posted to either side of the Greek mercenaries. The Cardaces, in all likelihood, should be identified with the peltasts of Callisthenes. These peltasts were stationed along the mid-section of the Pinarus River, between 1.6km and 3.5km from the coast. This section of the river was virtually impassable even for light infantry: their main function was to screen the left of the Greek mercenaries and defend against small scale crossings by the Macedonians. Light infantry could also be used to move rapidly up or downstream to oppose a breakthrough by the Macedonians.

If we are right in associating the Cardaces with the peltasts of Callisthenes, then Arrian is clearly wrong in calling them hoplites; they are also not an attempt by the Persians to develop a native force that could oppose Greek hoplites. Arrian no doubt simply made the error of assuming that in ancient warfare the centre of the line was invariably occupied by the heaviest infantry that were available. If Arrian was assuming this then it is understandable that he therefore believed the Cardaces to be hoplites, when in reality they were light-armed peltasts. Having said this we must remember that the Macedonian *pezhetairoi* and hypaspists were essentially peltasts themselves, possessing very little defensive armour and only a small shield. Given that they are almost always referred to as a phalanx, and thus regarded as being heavy infantry, we should not be too quick to label the Cardaces. Expressions like heavy infantry, light infantry, peltasts and skirmishers invite conclusions about their abilities and likely deployment which are not always valid.

The Persian order of battle, then, seems to have been as follows: the

extreme right was the heavy cavalry commanded by Nabarzanes, screened by a group of slingers and archers. Next to these were the Greek mercenary infantry in their prepared defensive position and commanded by Thymondas. Then came the Cardaces, perhaps 20,000 strong or slightly more given their frontage, commanded by Aristomedes, a Thessalian mercenary commander. Beyond these were stationed the Hyrcanian and Median cavalry along with a group of unspecified Persian cavalry and a detachment of javelin-men and slingers deployed in front of them. Behind the Persian front line was a reserve force of infantry for which Curtius gives the probably inflated figure of 40,000, and Darius himself along with his 3,000-strong cavalry guard.¹⁷⁵ It is likely that Curtius is correct in the location of Darius behind the front line, despite Arrian's seeming to place him in the centre of the front line; Persian monarchs did not typically fight at the front. Arrian is cautious about giving the total number of Persian troops at 600,000, reporting it as hearsay, although Plutarch gives the same figure. Diodorus and Justin report 400,000 infantry and 100,000 cavalry, whilst Curtius gives the lowest estimate, 250,000 infantry and 62,000 cavalry. All of these estimates may be too high but it is likely that Alexander was, as usual, heavily outnumbered.¹⁷⁶

Curtius explicitly lays out Darius' tactics for the battle: he at first intended to occupy the foothills with a force in excess of 20,000, intending to make an encircling movement "both in the front and in the rear".¹⁷⁷ On the seaward flank he apparently planned a similar operation: Darius, therefore, planned a double encirclement that would press Alexander from every direction. The strategy was sound if the topography allowed for it, as it had for the Persians at Cunaxa, and would again at Gaugamela. At Issus, however, the plain was narrow and Alexander's flanks were protected by the sea to the west and the Amanus Mountains to the east. Alexander had lured Darius into the Issus plain for this very reason.

Darius was no fool and realized that the plain was unsuitable for the double envelopment that he had planned, and his modified tactics demonstrate this. There were several changes to this preferred tactical plan, firstly the strong defensive position along the river bank already discussed.¹⁷⁸ The second change was far more complex and involved two phases: in the first, the advance guard of the Persian army, consisting of cavalry (apparently 20,000 strong, although this seems unlikely), archers and some light infantry, were to harass the Macedonian column on the seaward side, as it advanced onto the plain.¹⁷⁹ This sound stratagem was disrupted by Alexander deploying his heavy infantry in deep order to cover his deployment.¹⁸⁰ The second phase was to threaten an attack against Alexander's right flank, essentially to feign the envelopment strategy that had initially been planned. Once this had been accomplished they were to retire to the foothills and await the passing of the Macedonian flank, and this would present the opportunity for a version of the encirclement manoeuvre. The cavalry were quickly withdrawn by Darius once he saw that they would

be ineffective in disrupting the Macedonians.

The dominant topographical feature of the battlefield was the River Pinarus; for the purposes of examination it can be divided into a number of sections each with very different characteristics. The following descriptions of the three sections of the Pinarus River are based upon information preserved in the sources, and not on an identification of the ancient river with any of the modern rivers in the region, which has been argued is difficult. The first section had a stony river bed and shallow banks, perhaps 1–2m high, easily fordable by cavalry. The next section of river was narrow, 4–15m; its banks were steep and impassable to cavalry except at two narrow fords. The banks in the third section were steep, from 2–4m, effectively prohibiting both infantry and cavalry action. The final section of the river, leading into the foothills, was wide with precipitous banks, a minimum of 3m high rising to 10m in places, the only crossing point being a ford perhaps 3.5km from the sea.¹⁸¹

Darius evidently attempted to open the battle by sending a unit of cavalry across the ford on his left wing. It quickly became apparent to him, however, that the narrowness of that ford and the steepness of the banks along that section of the river would seriously hamper any encounter in that area. It could be that this movement of cavalry was a response to Alexander attempting to lure the Persians across the river. This would tend to fit with the general strategy of always fighting on terrain of his choosing, and of sacrificing a small unit to draw the enemy out of a defensive position. However, the fact that the troops were withdrawn by Darius suggests that their movement was proactive rather than reactive on the part of Darius. It seems most likely that he was attempting to open the battle himself rather than reacting to Alexander's lure. Arrian tells us that these troops were quickly withdrawn without an engagement and the bulk of the Persian cavalry strength was transferred to the Persian right.¹⁸² What remained on Darius' left was a relatively small force of cavalry and some light infantry in the foothills who were instructed to attack Alexander's flanks as they attempted to pass the ford. Darius evidently believed that an attack in strength across the upper section of the Pinarus would be difficult to execute but far easier to defend against.

Once it had become apparent to Alexander that the main thrust of the Persian offensive would come against his own left flank, he ordered the Thessalian cavalry to reinforce the left, taking care to conceal their movement behind the infantry. Arrian does not give us any information regarding exactly how Alexander managed, or even proposed, to hide the movement of 1,800 cavalry from one flank to the other. He also notes, however, that at the time of the transfer the plain was only just wide enough for some cavalry to occupy ground at the side of the heavy infantry. This cavalry in question was almost certainly the Companions, and thus the Thessalians were not at the front line at this time. Coupling this with the fact

that the infantry would have held their sarissas upright when they were still some distance from the enemy, and considering the amount of dust thrown up by the movement of tens of thousands of men and horses, it is not difficult to see how such a transfer could have been concealed. We should note the possibility that Alexander had always intended to employ the Thessalians on the left, as he did in every major engagement, and that the fact that the transfer had not occurred before this point is simply an indication of the lack of space in the plain; they would have had to wait until the infantry was sufficiently far advanced onto the plain to allow them to move from the pass, to the left. The counter to this argument, of course, is the fact that both Arrian and Curtius specifically tell us that the Thessalians and Macedonians were posted to the right initially, with only the Peloponnesians on the left.¹⁸³

This enforced movement of the Thessalians prompted Alexander to re-examine the tactical situation on his right flank. On his right, next to the Companions, he now posted the *prodromoi* under Protomachus, the Paenionian cavalry commanded by Ariston and Antiochus' Macedonian archers. To the extreme right Alexander deployed Attalus and his Agrianians and an unspecified unit of cavalry, along with one of archers. It can reasonably be assumed that this unit of cavalry were the Odrysians who are not mentioned in any account of the battle, but are presumably present. This final group on the right wing was drawn up at an angle to the front line and essentially formed the prototype of the flank guards that were so crucial to Alexander's success at Gaugamela.¹⁸⁴ Arrian also tells us that Alexander intended to divide his right wing into two prongs, the first to attack across the river and the flank guard to attack into the foothills. We will see many times during this study that Alexander frequently and deliberately allowed the army to lose its cohesion by separating off sections if it served his tactical purpose, as, for example, at the Granicus and the Hydaspes.

The tactical situation on the left was similar, although far less complex than on the right. The Thracian javelin-men under Sitalces and the Cretan archers were stationed to the left of the heavy infantry, forming a flank guard and a link with the Greek allied cavalry. This force was entirely inadequate to the task of resisting the charge of the massed Persian *cataphracts* that opposed them.¹⁸⁵ Curtius and Arrian both tell us that both horse and rider in the Persian heavy cavalry were covered with plate armour, thus losing considerable mobility.

While the transfer of the Thessalians was occurring, Alexander completed his tactical dispositions by placing the Greek mercenary infantry in their usual position behind the Macedonian heavy infantry as a reserve, as he was to do again at Gaugamela.¹⁸⁶ The contingent supplied by the League of Corinth is not mentioned as taking any role in the battle; but this should not surprise us greatly as Arrian's list of Alexander's dispositions is not comprehensive. He omits, for example, the Odrysian cavalry and Balacrus' javelin-men as well. We can reasonably assume that at least some of the

7,000 infantry supplied by the League of Corinth formed a second line along with the Greek mercenary infantry, but their lack of direct involvement in the battle led to them being omitted by our sources, again as was the case at Gaugamela.¹⁸⁷

As Arrian puts it, “Alexander observed a certain weakness on his right”, partly because the Persian line was strong and partly because it extended far beyond the Macedonian line into the mountains. Alexander countered this first by moving two *ilai* of Companion Cavalry from closer to the centre to add depth to the *prodromoi* and Paeonians already there, and by adding depth rather than extending the line, their movements would have been partially concealed from the Persians. Callisthenes tells us that Alexander had deliberately avoided deploying into the foothills so as to avoid the Persian skirmishers there, until he was ready.¹⁸⁸ Alexander's final dispositions were to transfer the Macedonian archers from the right of the heavy infantry, the Agrianians and some Greek mercenaries from the reserve line, at the extreme right, into the mountains. This resulted, according to Arrian, in Alexander's line actually outflanking the Persian left. The only remaining troops stationed in the foothills were two *ilai* of cavalry; Curtius seems to imply that they were the same units that were detached from the centre to the right, mentioned above, but it is highly unlikely that Alexander would use such a large number of his elite heavy cavalry on a mission better suited to light cavalry. This likely was an attempt by Curtius to simplify Alexander's complex dispositions.¹⁸⁹

From the Persian perspective, Darius' plan to outflank Alexander by deploying troops in the foothills was entirely sensible, but failed completely due to Alexander's ability to react to the fluid situation on the battlefield. Having said this, the tactical situation on the opposite wing was developing well for Darius. The sources differ widely on the detail of the engagement in this sector; in Arrian the engagement is of little importance, an adjunct to the fighting in the centre and on Alexander's right. Arrian clearly states that:¹⁹⁰

The Persian cavalry facing Alexander's Thessalians refused, once the battle had developed, to remain inactive on the further side of the stream, but charged across in a furious onslaught on the Thessalian squadrons.

The fighting was undoubtedly fierce and the Persians did not give way until they saw Darius in flight in the centre; only then were they routed, suffering the most significant losses of the battle whilst being pursued by Parmenio. Arrian's reduction of the significance of the role of the Thessalians and Parmenio in the battle is part of a long series of instances noted in previous chapters of attempts by Ptolemy to reduce the significance of Parmenio whilst glorifying Alexander's role in the battle.

Curtius' account is somewhat different: in this account the battle actually began on the Macedonian left wing.¹⁹¹ Curtius tells us explicitly that the

Persians attacked along the shoreline against the Peloponnesian and Greek allied cavalry before the Thessalians arrived; indeed their dispatch by Alexander seems to have come as a reaction to this opening Persian move. We can also gather from Curtius' narrative that the Peloponnesians and allied Greeks may have inadvertently begun the battle by straying into Persian missile range: "they had now come within javelin-range when the Persian cavalry made a furious charge on the left wing of their enemy".

Curtius goes on to say that:¹⁹²

When the Macedonian saw this he ordered two *ilai* to maintain a position on the ridge while he promptly transferred the rest to the heart of the danger. Then he withdrew the Thessalian cavalry from the fighting line, telling their commander to pass unobtrusively behind the Macedonian rear and join Parmenio.

Perhaps Curtius used a source biased towards Parmenio, whilst Arrian's demonstrated an anti-Parmenio stance.¹⁹³

Arrian ascribes the confidence in the Persian heavy cavalry to Darius, and it may be that Darius was confident enough before the battle to send a communication to Demosthenes in Athens almost guaranteeing victory. Demosthenes evidently flourished some letters, possibly communications from Darius.¹⁹⁴ Curtius' emphasis seems to be that Darius preferred a cavalry battle, not necessarily because of great confidence in this arm, but because he did not believe his infantry could win victory in the centre.

Curtius' brief account gives us a valuable insight into Alexander's tactical thinking. Alexander's initial dispositions may, at first sight, suggest that he believed that he was going to be fighting a cavalry battle on both flanks; as he approached the Pinarus River, Alexander evidently came to the conclusion that the foothills were entirely unsuitable for this kind of engagement. Darius had evidently already arrived at the same conclusion and transferred the bulk of his cavalry to the coastal strip. Alexander countered the Persian move by transferring the Thessalians to the left flank; the fact that he gave instruction for them to hide their movement behind the infantry line suggests that he intended to surprise the Persians on that wing. This is a typical, and reasonable, interpretation of the situation; it does not, however, go quite far enough in my view. Alexander had spent a considerable amount of time in this region prior to the battle and would have known the terrain well. It seems unlikely that he would have made such a tactical blunder as not to realize initially that the foothills were unsuitable for a cavalry action, and if we accept this point then what was Alexander doing? It seems likely that in accordance with Alexander's usual tactical plan, he intended to lure the Persians into attacking where it was most advantageous to Alexander. Regarding Alexander's deployment, Darius took this to be a mistake on the part of Alexander and reorganized his troops to make a massive and, he hoped, decisive, blow against Alexander's left. This is, I

believe, exactly what Alexander wanted. I think it is correct to say that Alexander ordered the Thessalians to conceal their movement behind the heavy infantry line in order to make a surprise flanking counter-attack against the Persian cavalry.¹⁹⁵ This could also explain the view suggested above that the Peloponnesian and Allied Greek cavalry strayed too close to the Persians intentionally in order to provoke an attack, even though they were massively outnumbered. Alexander simply outmanoeuvred Darius into fighting a battle on Alexander's terms.

Devine has argued that the absence of the Allied Greek cavalry from the narratives of the battle implies that their stand against the Persians was “unmemorable”, and that they must have been attacked before they could form up.¹⁹⁶ It is more likely, as argued above, that their failure was simply part of Alexander's tactical plan, and the surviving narratives omitting them is more to do with not wishing to glorify troops that did not form a core part of the army, instead concentrating on the role of the Thessalians and Parmenio on this flank. The sources do not credit Alexander with great genius in laying the trap here for a number of possible reasons. They may not have understood the nuances of the plan, actually believing it to be a mistake. If they did, then it was a mistake by untrained Greek Allies, and Alexander could hardly be blamed for that. They also have him reacting brilliantly to the situation and saving the day, thereby demonstrating the tactical speed of reaction that was one of his greatest strengths as a commander. Whatever the reality of what occurred on the left flank, mistake or superb tactics, the Persians had enough discipline to maintain their formation and ride over one *ile* of Thessalians. The superior mobility of the Thessalians carried the victory, however, maintaining their usual rhomboidal formations they were able to drive Nabarzanes' *cataphracti* back across the Pinarus. Curtius tells us that Persian horses and riders were less manoeuvrable than the Thessalians being weighed down by “rows of armour plating.”¹⁹⁷

The tactic of using a relatively weak body of cavalry as bait to draw a stronger force of enemy cavalry on to unfavourable ground and into a position where they could be exposed to a flanking attack by other, stronger Macedonian units is a regular feature of Alexander's battles. At the Granicus in the previous year, Alexander sacrificed his advanced cavalry guard in order to throw the Persian cavalry guarding the ford into confusion. At Gaugamela two years later, Alexander ordered the mercenary cavalry under Menidas to attack the vastly stronger Bactrian and Scythian cavalry commanded by Bessus, who were, at the time, moving around his right flank with the evident objective of attacking Alexander's rear. Menidas' cavalry were driven back and suffered heavy losses, but the attack was enough to cause confusion among Bessus' troops, which Alexander exploited by then committing his Paeonians, *Prodromoi* and a large body of mercenary infantry.¹⁹⁸

At Issus, the stratagem was relatively simple, but a tried and tested one. The allied Greek cavalry did not need to be particularly convincing, perhaps making a slight feint; but the Persian *cataphracti* were eager to attack a seemingly weak enemy. The result of Persian overconfidence was that they exposed their flanks to 1,800 well trained Thessalians, and fell neatly into Alexander's trap. This was a seemingly simple tactic, but one that was devastatingly effective, and one which Alexander perfected:¹⁹⁹

both Issus and Gaugamela saw it progressively developed and ingeniously adapted to specific circumstances and topographical conditions.

This is essentially the same tactic repeated a number of times, but it is far more complex than that. This tactic was used in different situations on different terrain and against different enemies each time. On every occasion Alexander needed to disguise his tactical plan by developing new means of deploying his troops in order to draw the Persians into his trap. The fact that it was gradually developed for every situation is the true adaptability. It is this kind of adaptability, the ability to fight in all conditions and all terrains, which marks Alexander out as a military genius.

In contrast to the complexity on the left, the battle on the right was far less innovative, although in all fairness it did not need to be. Arrian gives us a view of a spectacular cavalry charge, using the metaphor of the line surging forward like a wave to fall upon the enemy.²⁰⁰ This metaphor is clearly modelled on Xenophon's famous description of the Greek charge at Cunaxa, and is entirely incorrect.²⁰¹ There was simply no room for the battle to be conducted as Arrian described; it seems far more likely that the Persian left was driven back from the ford by a combination of the cavalry and light infantry units on Alexander's right, namely the *Prodromoi*, the Paeonians, the Macedonian archers and the Agrianians.

There is some debate as to which troops Alexander led in his initial push over the river that was opposed by nothing more than Persian archers. The debate surrounds the Greek word *dromōi* and what it typically referred to. Arrian used *dromōi* fifteen times in his military narratives, twelve of those in the *Anabasis*; three of these refer exclusively to cavalry, three to combined units of cavalry and infantry, two are indeterminate, and only seven definitely refer exclusively to infantry.²⁰² It seems, then, that we cannot use *dromōi* to state specifically that infantry (namely the hypaspists) made the initial attack; these troops were probably closer to the coast, occupying their typical position between the heavy infantry in the centre and the troops on the right. Alexander, therefore, likely led a unit of cavalry during this operation.

The theory that cavalry cannot attack across a river simply does not fit with the evidence we have, nor was it the case at the Granicus. It seems likely that the *Prodromoi* and Paeonians attacked first because they were a

little less encumbered by armour and thus more mobile; and it is highly likely that they would have been supported by light infantry like the Agrianians in their initial assault, again as at the Granicus, the Companions being spared for an attack on open ground once the river crossing had been achieved.

Once the light cavalry, supported by the Agrianians and archers, had forced the crossing, they held the enemy at bay while the Companions forded the river, *ile* by *ile*, and once on the far bank formed up into their wedge formations.²⁰³ Once in formation, the Companions took over from the light cavalry, charging at the remaining cavalry on the Persian left, the Hyrcanians and Medes, in the face of defensive fire from the nearby Persian archers. Darius had weakened his left in order to deliver what he hoped would be a hammer blow against the supposedly weak Macedonian left, but this decision proved fatal. The Persian left quickly melted away under the onslaught of the fresh Companion Cavalry.²⁰⁴ Once this breakthrough had been achieved, Alexander wheeled the Companions to their left to fall upon the Persian centre, where Darius was stationed. This flanking attack, such a hallmark of Alexander, was perfectly timed to coincide with the attack of the hypaspists under Nicanor, and the two *taxeis* of the heavy infantry on the right, those of Perdiccas and Coenus.

With the hypaspists and *pezhetairoi* attacking the Persian centre, and Alexander's cavalry attacking on the right, there seems to have been a gap in the Macedonian line between the two; evidently Alexander did not expect the Cardaces to attack over the river, as they were stationed along a section with high precipitous banks. The separation of Alexander's army into essentially two arms, the left and centre on the one hand, and Alexander's attack on the extreme right on the other, is highly reminiscent of my interpretation of the battle of the Granicus River, and indeed of the Hydaspes. The shock of the Macedonian heavy infantry attack across the river, combined with a flanking attack by Alexander and the Companion Cavalry, was simply too much for the Persian centre to handle. They quickly began to retreat, following the lead of Darius himself.²⁰⁵

Curtius places great emphasis upon Alexander's desire for *opimum decus* – a variant of the usual *opima spolia*, the arms taken in battle from a defeated enemy – in this case the death or capture of Darius. In spite of the overly dramatic feel to this statement, it may very well have been Alexander's main aim; killing Darius would effectively have ended the war and prevented the necessity for a Gaugamela. Cyrus the Younger made a similar attempt upon his brother Artaxerxes at Cunaxa in 401.²⁰⁶ With this plan in mind, Alexander would likely have expected to find Darius in the centre of the Persian line, but because of the steep banks along that stretch of the Pinarus, a direct frontal assault was impossible.²⁰⁷ Once a successful crossing had been achieved on the right, however, Alexander wheeled towards the Persian centre. This movement, coupled with the heavy infantry attack in the centre,

essentially created a twopronged penetration. In order to protect himself from the possibility of a counter-attack, Alexander created a second flank guard: the *prodromoi*, Paeonians, two *ilai* of Companions, the Macedonian archers, the Agrianians and some Greek mercenary infantry. The need for this flank guard was limited as the Persian extreme left had melted away; it would only have been used if that flank had had the discipline to reform, but it evidently did not.

The engagement in the centre of the line between the *pezhetairoi* and the Greek mercenary infantry of Darius was almost completely ignored by Curtius, who chose to concentrate on Alexander's action on the right, no doubt reflecting a bias in his source. Arrian, who gives some details, does not present an exhaustive or a particularly clear narrative. Arrian does tell us that the fighting was vigorous and brutal; he explains this by means of the river banks that were steep in many places, and because of the *pezhetairoi*'s movement towards their own right.²⁰⁸ It is clear that the heavy infantry were not making a basic frontal assault but that an intricate tactical plan was being played out. Commensurate with the desire for the *pezhetairoi* to coordinate their attack with Alexander, they needed to move *en echelon*, with the two right-hand *taxeis* leading the way, along with the hypaspists.

Once the right-hand two *pezhetairoi taxeis* crossed the river, they turned to their left to make a flanking attack against the Greek mercenary infantry, an attack timed to coincide with the full attack of the remaining four *pezhetairoi taxeis* advancing across the river.²⁰⁹ The hypaspists, on the other hand, seem to have continued advancing towards Darius and his bodyguards, this attack coinciding with Alexander's flanking attack from the extreme right. Arrian makes little or no mention of the Cardaces during the battle; this is not altogether surprising when we consider that the fighting simply passed them by. There seems to have been no Macedonian troops immediately opposing them; given that the banks were precipitous, they could have done little to prevent Alexander's cavalry charge on their left flank by the Companions. They also evidently did not react fast enough to the crossing of the hypaspists, who essentially ignored them and made straight for Darius.

The final element of the fighting that we must consider is the action surrounding Darius himself. Arrian portrays Darius fleeing the field almost at the outset of the battle, but Bosworth notes the possibility of a heroic stand by Darius' bodyguard as potentially being suppressed by Arrian or his sources. Arrian is, indeed, the only source to present this picture; the vulgate tradition speaks of vicious fighting around Darius and notes that he only fled when his horses began to panic and capture appeared imminent.²¹⁰ The vulgate account appears to be the one accepted by history; and the Alexander mosaic from the house of the Faun at Pompeii depicts either this stage of the fighting here, or the equivalent stage from the battle of Gaugamela. If Arrian is to be accepted, then the entirety of the vulgate tradition must be dismissed

on this point. If Arrian's account is correct, it likely originates with the court history; Callisthenes seems unlikely to have produced an account where Darius is seen as being almost as heroic as Alexander, despite his initial assertion that the two kings wished to meet on the field of battle.²¹¹ One final circumstantial piece of evidence for the last stand of Darius is that if he had fled immediately his officers are unlikely to have continued to fight bravely; flight would also have made raising another army at Gaugamela almost impossible if he had shown himself to be a coward. We can assume, therefore, that the vulgate tradition is correct in that the fighting surrounding Darius was fierce, and Darius' withdrawal occurred only when there was no alternative.

Connected with the flight of Darius is a theme that yet again echoes Gaugamela, the request for assistance, this time by the Macedonian centre. Arrian tells us that Alexander immediately turned back once news reached him that the heavy infantry were in trouble, and did not resume the pursuit of Darius until the whole of the Persian army was routed. Curtius' account is very similar, clearly deriving from the same source; Alexander only pursued Darius once the Persian right wing was in full retreat.²¹² Plutarch, on the other hand, has Alexander chase Darius for four or five stades (0.74km and 0.925km) and credits Darius with being able to cover it in a matter of minutes. The pursuit this far is reasonable enough within the bounds of battlefield manoeuvres, but it is unlikely that Alexander pursued Darius immediately for the 200 stades that Diodorus credits him with.²¹³ The only evidence for this is the (quite reasonably) presumed desire of Alexander to kill or capture Darius.

Casualties

Diodorus, Curtius and Arrian all give the same Persian casualty figures: 100,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry. Plutarch gives a round 110,000 total for the whole army and Justin differs from both in his 61,000 infantry and 10,000 cavalry along with 40,000 taken prisoner. The only source to dissent slightly from these massive numbers is the Oxyrhynchus Historian, who gives a total of 50,000 Persian infantry casualties and 3,000 cavalry, along with an unspecified number of mercenaries.²¹⁴ If we assume this unspecified number to have been of the order of 10,000 then we have almost the same totals as in Justin. Persian losses for the battle are massively inflated by our sources and we can never know the true figure; the best we can say, however, is that Persian losses would have been significant. This would have been partly due to the vicious nature of the fighting that comes through in our sources, and partly because of the pursuit of the fleeing enemy, albeit a limited pursuit.

Macedonian losses are a little more believable, if probably

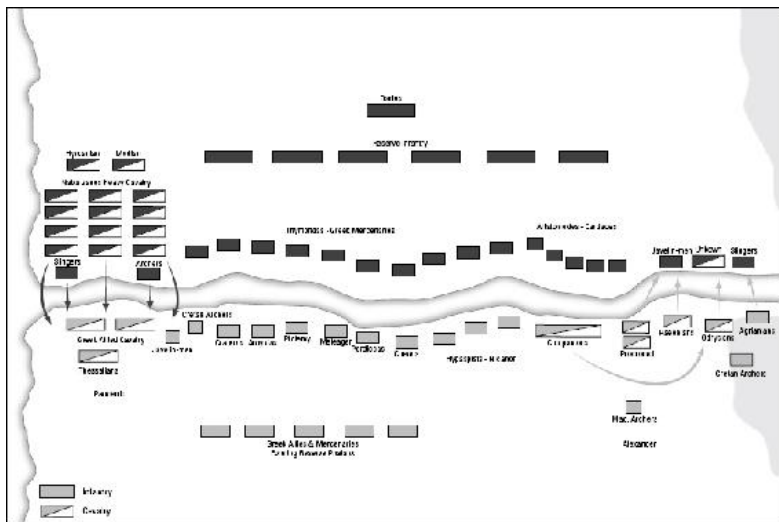
underestimated. The most frequently cited figure for cavalry losses is 150, in Diodorus, Curtius and Justin.²¹⁵ For infantry, Diodorus gives 300, Curtius only thirty-two and Justin 130. Arrian gives the lowest number at 120, although this is a figure only mentioned in passing and refers only to casualties among the *pezhetairoi* in their skirmish with the Greek mercenary infantry.²¹⁶ Arrian gives no overall figure for Macedonian casualties. The Oxyrhynchus Historian gives the highest figure at 1,000, although this may include the wounded, which Curtius puts at 504, which can probably be emended to 4,500.

Conclusion

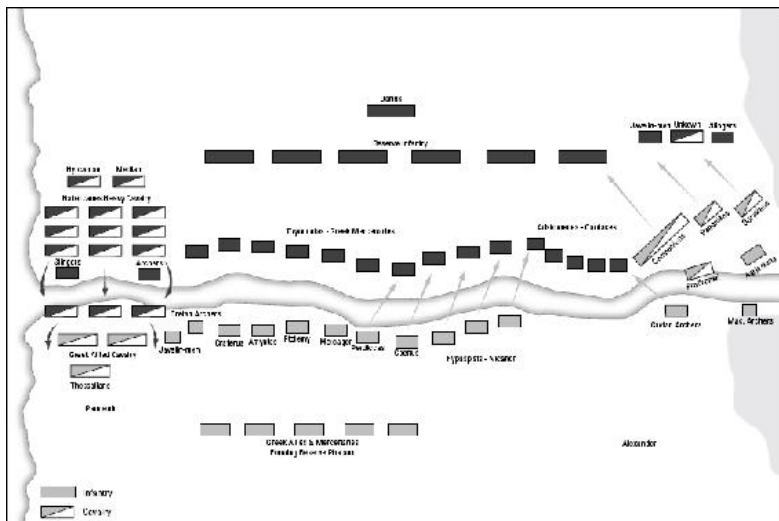
Darius' plan for the battle was sound; he evidently planned for a strong defence in the centre, aided by the abatis that he set up along the less steep sections of the river. It is clear that his tactics were not purely defensive, however, given his positioning of troops in the foothills with the intention of outflanking Alexander's right. His final plan, to attack Alexander in strength along the coast, shows Darius adapting to what he saw as the tactical situation of the battlefield: he believed that an opportunity had presented itself to deliver a decisive blow against that wing; the fact that this failed was more to do with Alexander's supreme planning, foresight, adaptability, and my proposal that this was Alexander's brilliantly laid trap, than any deficiency on the part of Darius.

For Alexander, we can see in the Battle of Issus his supreme strategic and tactical ability. Firstly drawing the Persians into terrain that was best suited to his army, as he so often does; and secondly in the execution of the battle itself. At Issus we see a series of brilliant flanking manoeuvres; the cavalry on the left luring the Persians forward only to be outflanked by the Thessalians moving from the right to execute a brilliantly planned trap. We also see Alexander forcing a crossing on the extreme right of the formation and then wheeling left to flank the Persian guard defending Darius. Next we see the hypaspists and the right-hand two *pezhetairoi taxeis* moving to their right to force a crossing of the river, then the *pezhetairoi* swinging left to flank the Greek mercenary infantry, at the same time as they were being attacked from the front by the rest of the heavy infantry. Finally we have the hypaspists, once across the river, swinging to the right to attack Darius in the opposing flank to Alexander.

This battle is a large-scale demonstration of some of the strategic and tactical skills that Alexander demonstrates throughout his career. Drawing the enemy onto ground favourable to him, attacking the enemy on two flanks simultaneously, and the brilliant use of every element of a combined arms force.²¹⁷



10. The Battle of Issus, Phase 3.



11. The Battle of Issus, Phase 4.

Chapter Six

Gaugamela, 331

Introduction

After the battle of Issus, Alexander took the key strategic decision not to chase Darius into the Persian heartlands, but instead to continue his policy of defeating the Persian navy on land by continuing south along the coast towards Tyre. Once Tyre and Gaza had been captured, and Egypt had been 'liberated' he was finally now in a position to return his attentions to the Great King and force a conclusion once and for all. Gaugamela presents us with just as many difficulties in reconstruction and interpretation as do the other set-piece battles; as with them, the main problems arise from significant differences in the surviving source material. Before attempting a reconstruction of the battle, and an understanding of Alexander's strategy, we must first discuss some of the difficulties with these sources.

Sources: Diodorus

Diodorus does not give us a continuous narrative of the battle, but instead concentrates on set-pieces: the Persian scythed chariots, the capture of the Macedonian baggage train, and the duel between Alexander and Darius. The only part of the battle that is narrated is the action involving the Thessalians towards its very end.²¹⁸ Diodorus' account has a tendency to be rather more graphic than that of Arrian: the Persian scythed chariots slicing off arms and severing heads, for instance. In Plutarch, Alexander only views Darius from a distance; but in Diodorus, Alexander gets close enough to throw a spear at the Great King which kills the driver of his chariot.²¹⁹ The very account of Darius' flight shows colour that is lacking in other sources, occurring as it does in a cloud of dust, and behind the Macedonian front line.²²⁰

Darius was a clever strategist. He took advantage of the great cloud of dust and did not withdraw to the rear like the other barbarians, but swinging in the opposite direction and covering his movement by the dust, got away safely himself and brought all his troops into villages which lay behind the Macedonian position.

Parmenio is treated favourably by Diodorus, a fact which presents a number

of problems. This treatment decreases the likelihood that he was influenced by the negative sentiment in Callisthenes. It is possible that the prominent place of the Thessalian cavalry in both Diodorus and Plutarch suggests a commonality of sources; but I think it more likely that, in the absence of specific passages that are obviously from the same source, their prominent role in both was simply a reflection of actual events; that is to say that they in fact did have a significant role in the battle. It has been argued that this commonality of source is a reflection of the pan-Hellenic nature of Callisthenes; but the prominent role of Parmenio, and not just of the Thessalians, calls this into question.²²¹

The incident of the call for help by Parmenio, just after he began the pursuit of Darius (or perhaps just before it began), is also interesting. Again, it shows no malice towards Parmenio at all, but simply presents a picture of the Thessalians in genuine difficulty asking for help. Diodorus, in common with Arrian, simply presents Alexander's response without comment, unlike Plutarch and Curtius who note Alexander's frustration. Interestingly, along with Diodorus' attributing no blame to Parmenio for this incident, he also attributes no blame to Alexander. Diodorus' account is far less useful than Curtius or Arrian, but surely deserves more than to be called “childish and worthless” as in Hammond.²²²

Polyaenus

Polyaenus is our least important surviving source, although he still offers some interesting information. He again offers no continuous narrative of the battle, but at two points recounts key anecdotes. The first is a recounting of the Persian attack on the Macedonian baggage train, as well as Alexander's reply to Parmenio's plea for assistance. Polyaenus' version follows the tradition that denigrated Parmenio, and thus probably finds its source in Callisthenes. This is not something that Polyaenus places great emphasis upon, however. The second anecdote of note regards the Persian caltrops (essentially holes dug into the ground so that charging cavalry would step in the holes and break their legs, a form of ancient land mines) that were prepared on the battlefield before the Macedonians arrived. Polyaenus claims Alexander's movement to the right before the battle was to avoid these devices. The Persian reaction, moving their line to their left to maintain the integrity of their flank, resulted in the line breaking. This break was brilliantly exploited by Alexander; the incident is accurately described and shows significant similarities with the relevant section in Arrian.²²³

Curtius

Curtius' account of Gaugamela is by far the most problematic of the surviving sources: the account lacks internal cohesion and many modern authorities have dismissed the account as being impossibly confusing and contradictory.²²⁴ We should not be too quick to dismiss Curtius, however, as he does contain some material, without which Arrian would be harder to understand.

Curtius' objective with his account of Gaugamela is to highlight the activities of the principal characters, Alexander, Darius and Parmenio, whom he accuses of gross dereliction of duty. There are also parts played by Sisigambis, Mazaeus, Artes, Aristander, etc. Due to this aim, the narrative is episodic and highly disorganized, as when he confuses the distinction between the Macedonian front and rear lines. As noted above, however, the account is vital for some of the information it provides, as will be discussed in more detail later.

Elsewhere in his work, Curtius cites three sources: Cleitarchus, Timagenes and Ptolemy.²²⁵ Neither Cleitarchus nor Timagenes are likely to have been the primary source for a battle narrative, and an examination of commonalities with Arrian, who is undoubtedly based upon Ptolemy, shows that he also was not Curtius' main source, although there are enough commonalities to suggest that he did indeed have access to Ptolemy's account. Curtius' attitude towards Parmenio provides us with some clues as to his main source; in places he follows a tradition that is favourable towards Parmenio, whilst being hostile towards Menidas, who was heavily implicated in Parmenio's murder; although there is undoubted criticism of Parmenio also, for example with his call for assistance at the end of the battle.²²⁶ Curtius' picture of Alexander himself is also rather different from that which would have been found in Callisthenes. Alexander is depicted as gnashing his teeth in frustration and rage at the escape of Darius, but Curtius perhaps goes too far in describing Alexander as indecisive and prone to panic.²²⁷ This presentation of Alexander tallies nicely with the often positive picture presented of Parmenio, as noted above. Curtius links his occasionally negative picture of Alexander with an improbable description of the Macedonian army as also being prone to panic. The over-generalized statement that he puts in the mouth of Parmenio, that "soldiers, he said, were more prone to groundless and irrational fears than to those having some justification" is unlikely to be true of any successful veteran army; nor does it seem likely that a commander would have such a low opinion of his own core troops.

Curtius' contribution to our understanding of the battle of Issus is considerable; it is unfortunate that his narrative of Gaugamela does not match that precedent. Having said this, however, he does provide a number of key pieces of evidence that we do not find anywhere else. He tells us categorically that Mazaeus was commander of the Persian right flank, and Bessus of the left. The respective orders of battle are also worthy of note; his

representation of the Macedonians is confused by several key misunderstandings; for example, two *taxeis* of *pezhetairoi* (Craterus and Meleager) are omitted from the Macedonian order of battle (4.13.26–31); an incorrect distinction is made between the phalanx and a *taxis* of the *pezhetairoi* (4.13.28); Craterus is a cavalry commander rather than a *taxiarch* (4.13.29) as in Arrian, the Agrianians become cavalry troops (nowhere else attested and I assume an error, 4.15.21–22); and finally, the rear line of infantry begin the battle facing away from the enemy (3.13.31).²²⁸

His picture of the Persians gives us vital information. Curtius' picture does differ from that of Aristobulus, but is extremely detailed, and provides us with the only evidence we have for the strength of some of the key elements of the Persian army, as well as information on its command structure.²²⁹ Curtius also gives us information that helps us to locate the Persian positions, and therefore the site of the battlefield, by noting Darius' advance of eighty stades from the Lycus to the Boumelus and his final march of ten stades to the battlefield.²³⁰ Whilst I have argued that Curtius' general narrative of Gaugamela is seriously flawed, I have also noted that there are a number of key areas where we can believe him at the expense of Arrian: this seems on the surface contradictory. For most of this battle, the reconstruction has to come from the narrative of Arrian, but with specific regard to the orders of battle of each side, Curtius gives us far greater detail than does Arrian. The amount of detail suggests that he heavily relied upon a very detailed source (perhaps one that had access to the captured Persian battle plans, if they existed). Further to this, his account of the dispositions looks credible and their data were not negatively affected by whatever dubious sources he used to reconstruct the rest of his narrative of Gaugamela.

Arrian

For the campaign of Gaugamela, Arrian certainly is our best surviving source. The narrative he provides is the most detailed and cohesive, and he provides tactical information that is coherent, and not simply intended to aid the narrative flow. Despite this general point, some caveats must be noted; his account is not always clear or easy to unravel in order to determine the exact sequence of events. More recently, however, there has been a trend to place Arrian's narrative under greater scrutiny than had been the case previously.²³¹

When using Arrian, it is normally assumed that his use of Ptolemy, who was himself a leading military figure in Alexander's army, makes his account the most reliable. We know that Ptolemy was indeed present at both Issus and the Hydaspes, and it is assumed that he was also an eyewitness to Gaugamela, but this assumption needs to be challenged. In fact, it is impossible to prove that Ptolemy was actually present at Gaugamela at all:

comparison between the accounts of Gaugamela and the Hydaspes reveals considerable differences with regard to the use of terminology, and the level of detail provided. Ptolemy's presence at the latter battle, the level of detail provided, and Arrian's frequent citation of Ptolemy there, all make it clear that he was Arrian's primary source for the Hydaspes.²³² This could well not be the case at Gaugamela, and although this is speculation and essentially an argument from absence (i.e. we have no direct proof that he either was or was not at Gaugamela), I think it is a reasonable one based upon the differences in terminology from a battle where we can reasonably assume Ptolemy's presence based upon Arrian's citations. The differences in terminology etc. in all likelihood lead us to the conclusion that the account of Callisthenes was probably Arrian's main source for Gaugamela. If Ptolemy was not there, then we can only speculate that Ptolemy probably had not returned from a scouting mission. Alexander's advance to Gaugamela was slow, as discussed below, and numerous scouting and foraging parties would have been in the field at any given time.

In reproducing or adapting large sections of Callisthenes' official account, Ptolemy could easily excise Callisthenes' many misrepresentations that would have been included at the approval of Alexander himself.²³³ At the time of Ptolemy's writing, both Alexander and Parmenio were long dead, so he would have had little reason simply to reproduce Callisthenes blindly, especially where he had knowledge to the contrary. We should finally note that Ptolemy would have been unwilling, even after Alexander's death, to impugn his military reputation; the figure of Alexander loomed large over the successors for many years after his death in 323.

Prelude to Battle

Alexander arrived in Egypt, remained briefly as he secured the administrative issues of the area, and then headed back towards Tyre during the harvest, so that he could ensure continuity of supply for the coming campaign. Alexander set off from Memphis some time in April 331 and marched along a pre-prepared path across bridges that had been erected across the Nile. Alexander quickly crossed the Sinai and headed back towards Tyre; we know almost nothing of the journey except that he conducted a campaign in Samara, where his governor had been executed in an uprising.²³⁴ From there he headed directly for Tyre. Alexander's second delay at Tyre was in a similar vein to his delay in Egypt: he was securing the administration of the city and region in order to ensure supplies were successfully moved by ship from the newly founded Alexandria (or some other more established nearby port) to Tyre, from which they would be forwarded as required. There was a second reason for Alexander to delay the coming battle: the previous winter Alexander had sent for reinforcements

from the Balkans. During his stay in Egypt these reinforcements, 15,000 strong, had set out from Macedonia and they were in Asia Minor at the time Alexander set out from Tyre. Why then did Alexander not delay long enough for this considerable body of men to reach him? The answer is likely the young king's renowned impatience. He had already delayed the decisive battle with Darius for over a year and he was no doubt desperate to force a conclusion: this rashness in Alexander's character could so often have proved fatal; but here, as in the rest of his career, luck was to be on his side.

The campaign of Gaugamela can be considered to begin in early summer; although not earlier than 10 July, as Arrian tells us that Alexander reached Thapsacus during the archonship of Aristophanes in the month of Hecatombaeon (10 July – 9 August).²³⁵ Some time earlier, Alexander had sent Hephaestion with a team of engineers to construct two wooden bridges, in separate locations, across the Euphrates. This must have been at least a month earlier, as Arrian clearly states that the bridges were almost complete when Alexander reached Thapsacus. Hephaestion had failed to complete the two bridges, despite having sufficient time to do so, because the far bank was guarded by Mazaeus and 3,000 Persian cavalry.²³⁶ Upon Alexander's arrival, Mazaeus withdrew and the crossings were quickly completed. Curtius and Diodorus support Arrian's claim that Mazaeus was charged with preventing the Macedonian crossing of the Euphrates, but also mention orders to prevent Alexander's crossing of the Tigris.

In a key passage, Arrian then tells us what Alexander did after crossing the Euphrates:²³⁷

He then proceeded up country, with the river Euphrates and the Armenian Mountains on his left, through the land called Mesopotamia.

Alexander could not have travelled very far north, and he certainly did not reach the Armenian Mountains. It was perhaps only a day or two of travel before heading directly east towards the Tigris and the ultimate site of battle; at this point Alexander likely followed the military highway. Why did Alexander head north at all, rather than southeast towards the wealthy centres of Babylon and Susa? It is entirely possible that Mazaeus had initiated a scorched earth policy in that region, as reported by Curtius, to force Alexander in a northerly direction: this whole issue hinges, however, on the location of Darius' army at this time.²³⁸

Most modern authors have tended to ignore this vital question, but it needs to be addressed. Diodorus and Curtius both tell us that Darius marshalled and trained his new army in Babylon, but there is little evidence that he remained in Babylon at the time of Alexander's crossing of the Euphrates. Curtius tells us that the Persians began to marshal when Alexander was in Egypt, and we know his march northeast was slow, with a lengthy stop in Tyre; the Persians, therefore, had plenty of time to train and equip their new

army before Alexander reached the Euphrates.²³⁹

Why did the Persians move north? There can be little doubt that a major objective of Alexander would be the wealthy administrative centres of Babylon and Susa, together with their equally wealthy hinterlands, so why abandon them? Many commentators have made much, rightly so, of the wide open plains of northern Mesopotamia, and of how they were particularly suited to the Persian army. Seldom has it been noted, however, that the plains north of Babylon were at least equally suitable for the Persians. Staying in Babylon would have meant that the Persian levies would not have to undertake a lengthy march north, and would have stayed on their lines of supply. Darius no doubt envisioned a replay of Cyrus' march, and a second Cunaxa, with similarly positive results. Curtius is probably correct in suggesting a scorched earth policy: this would again re-enact the Cunaxa style campaign as well as explaining the size of Mazaeus' contingent.²⁴⁰ This detachment was too large to be scouting and too small to oppose a Macedonian crossing successfully. Darius' decision to reintroduce scythed chariots to the Persian order of battle is another indication that Cunaxa was heavily on his mind.

The Persian strategy is, therefore, relatively easy to follow: they would muster and train north of Babylon, destroy fodder to the north of this area and await Alexander's arrival. Darius would reasonably have expected Alexander to march directly towards him at Babylon, rather than in the opposite direction, seemingly avoiding a confrontation. If Alexander was to have operated in the manner Darius expected, the Macedonians would have arrived in poor shape having undertaken a lengthy march, with the Persians fresh and ready to do battle. The Persian strategy is remarkably reminiscent of the strategy of Saladin at Hattin in 1187, one of the bloodiest battles of the crusades, and a disaster for the crusaders, as it surely would have been for Alexander. The Persian strategy is sound; it was simply that Alexander had other ideas.

Arrian gives us a very clear indication of Alexander's strategic plans, stating that "Alexander did not march by the direct road to Babylon".²⁴¹ This statement of Arrian strongly implies that Babylon was the ultimate objective, otherwise he would have made some statement to the effect that Alexander was moving north to engage Darius because he was in the Gaugamela region, or that Alexander was drawing him in that direction. The very mention of Babylon tells us that Alexander was fully aware of the strategic situation whilst at Thapsacus.

Another reason for Alexander heading north is perhaps an historical precedent noted earlier. There is only one direct indication in the whole of the surviving source material that Alexander was aware of Xenophon's *Anabasis*, although we can reasonably assume that he did, and would therefore be aware of the fate of that expedition at Cunaxa. We know from

his use of captured native guides elsewhere that Alexander would have attempted to gain some local knowledge of the terrain between the bridges over the Euphrates and Babylon. He would have quickly determined that the plain was of varying widths, but was always a relatively narrow strip of fertile land between two deserts to east and west. He would also have been aware of the scorched earth policy executed by Mazaeus, and therefore a move north was the best strategic option. As always, Alexander attempted to lure the enemy into terrain of his choosing, even when that, at first sight, favoured the enemy. In this decision, Alexander shows rather more restraint than some would suggest him capable of. We must also note, however, a similar decision after Issus not to force an immediate battle that would have perhaps been unfavourable to Alexander.

Alexander's strategy of drawing the Persians towards him was based upon more than simply hope. Alexander's experience with the Persians to this point in his career had demonstrated that they were extremely unwilling to allow the Macedonians to occupy more Persian land than was absolutely necessary.²⁴² Now that Darius had a large standing army once again, Alexander would have judged this strategy to continue. Alexander expected Darius to march out of Babylon and engage him.

Alexander's decision brought some immediate benefits to the Macedonians. They would not only be fighting on terrain of their choosing, in an area with greater access to vital supplies, but forcing Darius to pursue effectively ended the training that was underway of the new Persian army. The army had been recently gathered and would have consisted largely of conscripts; a lengthy training period was vital, yet impossible on the long march north.

Alexander crossed the 2,400 stades, or 460km, between Thapsacus and the crossing point on the Tigris relatively slowly.²⁴³ Assuming Alexander set out around the end of July, this would give him around 54 days to cross this distance, a rate of march of only 8.2kmpd. Alexander frequently achieved rates of in excess of 24kmpd for the whole army through enemy terrain so we must ask why so slow now? Darius, conversely, would have set out around one week after Alexander, allowing for the time it would take for Mazaeus to report Alexander's unexpected change of direction. The Persians had to march around 595km in perhaps 47 days, a rate of 12.66kmpd. The Persians would have found it harder than the Macedonians to keep up this rate of march, their army being less well trained whilst also being considerably larger and more encumbered. Nevertheless, this is an entirely plausible rate of march. We can reasonably speculate that Alexander's slow march rate was because he did not want to tire his army before the coming battle. His advanced scouts would have informed him that the Persians were waiting at Gaugamela, and Alexander was evidently prepared to let them wait until he was ready.

Once Darius realized that his dreams of recreating Cunaxa had failed, he dispatched Mazaeus once again to reconnoitre all potential crossing points on the Tigris. The intention cannot have been to oppose Alexander's crossing, as the force he sent was simply too small to achieve this, it must have been simply to report on his location. On the journey to the Tigris, Alexander captured several men from the Persian army; Arrian calls them men "who had gone off on reconnaissance".²⁴⁴ These prisoners told Alexander of Darius' location at Arbela; upon receiving the news Alexander hastened towards the Tigris. Alexander reached the Tigris on 18 September and crossed by the most obvious route, the ford at Abu Dhahir, this being the location of the crossing of the Persian Royal Road over the Tigris. The crossing was unopposed, yet still difficult due to the current, and a number of men died. The water was fast flowing and chest deep; Diodorus records:²⁴⁵

The force of the current swept away many who were crossing and deprived them of their footing, and as the water struck their shields, it bore many off their course and brought them into extreme danger.

Alexander's defence against the current was to have his men lock arms; this would ensure a certain amount of stability against the force of the current. It also probably meant that the shield would be slung over the back, and thus be less likely to catch the water and act as a sort of parachute than if it were carried by hand. Cavalry were also probably deployed as a screen slightly upstream to break up the current.

After the arduous crossing of the Tigris, Alexander allowed his troops to rest for a while. During this time there was an almost total eclipse of the moon; Alexander then offered sacrifice to the Sun, Moon and Earth showing a high degree of understanding of this astronomical phenomenon. The eclipse reached its peak at 21.12hrs on 20 September 331. Plutarch notes that it occurred at the same time as the start of the Eleusinian Mysteries in the month of Boedromion, also noting that eleven nights after the eclipse was the eve of battle.²⁴⁶ In his *Camillus*, Plutarch gives a date for Gaugamela as 15 Boedromion, which was indeed the beginning of the Eleusinian mysteries. Plutarch's dating is internally consistent and provides a synchronous point; 15 Boedromion equates to 20 September; the battle, therefore, took place on 1 October 331.²⁴⁷

Topography of the Battlefield

Only Arrian and Curtius provide us with any useful topographical details of the battlefield, the main feature being its flatness, save for the nearby mound of Tell Gomel, and the presence of two rivers. Arrian tells us that Darius pitched camp on the river Boumelus, the modern Boumodus noting that the estimated distance from Arbela was 600 stades. Later he notes varying

estimates of the distance, ranging from 500–600 stades.²⁴⁸ The second river, the Lycus, was located behind Darius' lines and only crossed by Alexander while in pursuit of Darius after the battle. The Lycus is now known as the Great Zab, and is around 32km directly east of the battlefield. Curtius is a little more precise in his information regarding the two rivers; he tells us that Darius left his baggage train at Arbela, bridged the Lycus River, and advanced the 80 stades to the eventual battlefield.²⁴⁹ Curtius' figure of 80 stades is an underestimate as it is about half the actual distance travelled.

The location of Gaugamela seems almost certain. Ever since the nineteenth century it has been known that the mound of Tell Gomel etymologically preserves the name of Gaugamela; the mound itself, however, proved difficult to locate accurately. Modern estimates of the distance between Arbela and Gaugamela vary between 80 and 95km.

Both Arrian and Curtius mention a range of hills in front of the Persian position.²⁵⁰ Arrian notes that Alexander crested these hills the night before the battle, and sighted the enemy some 60 stades away. These hills are almost certainly the Jebel Maqlub range. In order to take up his position, Darius would have had to turn off the Royal Road before reaching Manqube, and march a significant distance to the north. This movement matched Curtius' march of 80 stades, as well as allowing for the advance of 10 stades in order of battle.

Of the topography of the battlefield itself, there is little that can be said. The Persians had taken up position in a vast featureless plain; they had evidently taken some time before Alexander's arrival to level the area artificially to allow for deployment of their cavalry and scythed chariots. The only topographical feature of note was a stretch of ground that remained untouched by the Persians, evidently a range of hills.²⁵¹ Darius either did not have time to level this area, or felt they were too far to his left to feature in the battle. As always, however, Alexander chose not to fight on his enemies' chosen ground, but upon his own, and his movement towards these foothills on his right enabled this.

Macedonian Order of Battle

The battle of Gaugamela was a new challenge to Alexander: he faced Darius on terrain that had been specially prepared to optimize the use of the enemy's cavalry and scythed chariots. The most obvious tactical issue faced by Alexander as a result of the terrain was the discrepancy in troop numbers, and the inherent advantages that afforded Darius. The discrepancy was so great that a double envelopment was a real possibility against the Macedonians. According to Arrian:²⁵²

The order to fall in was given, and at night, about the second watch,

the advance began, so timed to engage the enemy at dawn

Alexander left behind his baggage train and intended to force a battle at dawn. The baggage train reappeared during the battle, however, and we must conclude that some baggage, probably replacement weapons, food and water, were brought up to the battlefield and left within easy reach of the infantry. The problems do not end there, however. No other source mentions a night march, and if Curtius is to be believed that the camp was pitched when Darius was still 150 stades away (28.8km), then a prolonged night march was remarkably foolish on the part of Alexander.²⁵³ The night march would have been over unknown ground using guides that were Persian and marching towards a numerically superior enemy. Arrian himself, later, even presents the march as being by day. The problems surrounding the night march come within the context of the location of the Macedonian base camp. Arrian mentions two camps, the fortified base camp and the temporary camp close to the battlefield 30 stades (5.76km) from the Persian line.²⁵⁴ Curtius confuses the situation, however, by noting three camps: the four-day rest camp, the temporary camp below the hill occupied by Mazaeus, and the fortified camp on the hill that was soon vacated by Mazaeus.²⁵⁵ The commonality in the sources is that the final camp was on the hill overlooking Gaugamela; but in Arrian it was temporary, in Curtius, fortified. The final difficulty comes during the battle itself: for Curtius, the camp is the planned target of a large force commanded by Mazaeus; for Arrian, it is ransacked as the result of an unforeseen breakthrough of Alexander's lines; the reality is unknowable.

After a four-day pause, perhaps caused by rumours of hidden traps in the plain set by Darius for Alexander's cavalry, both armies began to move towards each other; they each took up formation. This occurred before each commander saw the other, and must have been based partly upon scouting reports and an estimation of what the enemy intended to do. This topographical and numerical disadvantage forced Alexander to innovate. Alexander had no natural obstacles upon which to rest his flanks as at Issus, so he adopted a formation that may be called a tactical square. The Macedonian front was drawn up along its usual lines, but at either side were placed flank guards; these were drawn back at an angle from the main line, and behind this was a reserve line.²⁵⁶

The accounts of the order of battle of the Macedonian army at Gaugamela are by far the most detailed that we possess. The surviving sources provide us with a picture that disagrees significantly in only one respect: who led Amyntas' *taxis* of heavy infantry? This is hardly a major difficulty in analysing the battle.

Arrian begins his detailed dispositions on the right of the main line where the Companion Cavalry were stationed, the *agema* which was commanded by Cleitus. Towards the centre were the Companion Cavalry *ilai* of Glaucias,

Ariston, Sopolis, Heracleides, Demetrius, Meleager and Hegelochus. After the cavalry came the heavy infantry, as always led by the hypaspists, commanded by Nicanor; following these three *taxeis* were the Companion Cavalry commanded by Philotas, who took general control of the right side of the line, but his location is unspecified, presumably somewhere in the centre of the line.²⁵⁷ The *pezhetairoi taxeis* were commanded by Coenus, Perdikkas, Meleager, Polyperchon, Philippus (Simmias in Arrian) and Craterus. Arrian adds the curious point that Craterus “commanded all the infantry in that sector”. Given that he was describing the dispositions in the centre of the line, he can only be referring to that sector, and thus Craterus must have had overall command of the *pezhetairoi*. If this is the case, it is the only instance in the sources of the *pezhetairoi* having an overall commander; if this were the case, it is curious that he would be positioned at the extreme left of the six *taxeis*, however. Completing the extreme left of the front line were the allied cavalry under Erigyius and the Thessalian cavalry under Philip; although the overall commander of the left, including the Thessalians was, as always, Parmenio.

Behind the front line was a reserve line of infantry. Curtius is the only source that gives any detail of its composition; Diodorus does not even mention its existence whilst detailing the Macedonian dispositions. Curtius tells us it comprised the Illyrians and mercenary infantry, along with the Thracian light-armed. This must have been the general composition as these are the only troops that are not stationed elsewhere during the battle. Curtius' belief that the rearguard began the battle facing away from the Persians is surely a misunderstanding.²⁵⁸ Arrian, more reasonably, claims that they initially faced the enemy, with both claiming that they had the tactical flexibility to change their frontage by 180° to face in the opposite direction. The basic fact of a reserve line that could face away from the Persian starting position in order to form an enclosed square is key, however.

The positioning of the flank guards was fundamental to Alexander's strategy. Arrian tells us that on the left flank:²⁵⁹

one half of the Agrianians, commanded by Attalus and in touch with the Royal Squadron on the right wing, were, together with the Macedonian archers under Brison, thrown forward at an oblique angle, in case it should suddenly prove necessary to extend or close up the front line of infantry.

In order to maintain a frontage facing the enemy, but still protecting the flanks of the army without exposing its own, the flank guards were likely at an angle of 45° to the main line.²⁶⁰ The idea of the flank guards being at an angle, but also of the main line being drawn back *en echelon*, is extremely unlikely. This would result in neither the flank guard nor the main line actually facing the enemy; there seems no reason for Alexander to have done this. The most plausible and simple solution is that the main line did indeed

face the Persians directly and the flank guards were at an angle. This would maintain the ability to extend the main line if necessary by the flank guards moving parallel to the front, or closing the tactical square by them pivoting backwards slightly. The only interpretation of the sources that makes sense is that the flank guards were at an angle to the main line, with the flexibility of closing the formation or extending it. Curtius' description of the formation as "roughly rectangular" does not detract from the angled flank guard theory; but it has been over-used in support in the above-discussed modern theories.²⁶¹

The flank guards were undoubtedly powerful, and not simply afterthoughts to the tactics of the battle. They were arranged as follows: on the left were stationed the Thracian javelin-men (under Sitalces), Cretan archers, Achaean mercenary infantry, Allied Greek cavalry (Coeranus), Odrysian cavalry (Agathon) and the mercenary cavalry (Andromachus). The right-hand flank guard was at least as strong, and probably rather stronger than the left and consisted of the Agrianians (Attalus), the Macedonian archers (Menidas), the 'old' mercenary infantry (Cleander), the *Prodromoi* (Aretes) and the Paeonian cavalry (Ariston).

On the extremes of the line were stationed the best of the cavalry units, as was usual. To the left were the Thessalians, commanded by Philip, as well as a body of allied Greek cavalry under Erigyius; Parmenio, of course, held overall command on the left. To the right were stationed the Companion Cavalry commanded by Philotas; Alexander was also stationed with the Companions. The Companion Cavalry were subdivided into eight *ilai*, these being commanded by Glaucias, Ariston, Sopolis, Heracleides, Demetrius, Meleager and Hegelochus with the so called royal *ile* commanded by 'Black' Cleitus.²⁶²

According to Arrian the Macedonian army as a whole consisted of around 7,000 cavalry and 40,000 infantry. Arrian does not give us any indication of his source for this figure, but it is generally thought to be from Ptolemy or Aristobulus and probably originating with Callisthenes' account.²⁶³ If this is the case, and if the figures are correct, and there is no reason to doubt them, then the cavalry had increased in number significantly since 334 when the highest figure for their numbers was that of Anaximenes at 5,500.²⁶⁴ Given that both the Companion Cavalry and the Thessalians appear to have had a relatively static number of troops, around 1,800 each, as they were at the crossing of the Hellespont in 334, the increase must have come from somewhere else. Their source must be the allied Greek states, as there is no mention at this time of Persian cavalry units being incorporated into the army. The other possibility, of course, is that the numbers were simply inflated by our surviving sources, but whilst we know that this could happen (the size of Alexander's army at Gaugamela for example), we should not simply assume the sources were lying or mistaken every time a small discrepancy is noted.

Persian Order of Battle

Arrian goes to great lengths to tell us that, after the battle, certain Persian documents written by Darius himself which detailed the Persian order of battle fell into Greek hands:²⁶⁵

We are informed by Aristobulus that Darius' written orders for the disposition of his troops came into Greek hands after the battle; we know, consequently, what his order of battle was.

The information contained in Arrian's Persian order of battle is usually considered to be authentic, with some justification.²⁶⁶ Of all of Alexander's set-piece battles, Gaugamela is the only one where we have such detailed dispositions, including nationalities of each contingent. Although the dispositions in Arrian and Curtius are similar in broad outline, Curtius gives a description that is significantly different in certain details.²⁶⁷ The Cossaei, Gortuae and Phrygian contingents only appear in Curtius, for example. There are differences in the locations of certain contingents too: Curtius places the Susian cavalry further to the left than does Arrian/Aristobulus whilst the Cadusii are placed on the right instead of to the left of centre. Part of these difficulties could be carelessness on the part of our surviving sources. A more significant error, however, could come from difficulties in translation. Any captured Persian documents, especially ones written by Darius' royal scribes, would have been in Aramaic; translating these into Greek may have proven problematic and could easily account for differences in positions of troops etc. for two main reasons. The meaning of the Aramaic could well have been unclear to the Greeks and after a period of time a number of different translations may have been in circulation leading to potential discrepancies (although I would count this as possible rather than likely). Another possibility is that Aristobulus was the only contemporary source to use the captured documents, but this seems very unlikely indeed. Such documents, and I think we can assume they existed, were likely to have been captured at Arbela after the battle; Alexander failed to capture Darius there but he did find "all of his valuables", which included three or four thousand talents and a large wardrobe of Persian attire.²⁶⁸

As always in the ancient world, numbers for each side in battles are inflated, either for propaganda or through errors in transmission etc. Gaugamela is no exception, as we will see later. Despite the difficulties caused by the lack of accuracy of expression, as well as errors, we can still establish the relative positions of many of the key Persian units, as well as approximate strengths. The Persian left wing was held by a large force of Bactrian cavalry, perhaps 8,000 strong; these were under the leadership of Bessus, the satrap of Bactria. Arrian mentions them as stationed on the left, and as being only 1,000 strong. This is probably an error of Arrian; he may be referring to a smaller flank guard detachment. It is Curtius who gives their

strength. Curtius, however, goes on to confuse matters by stating that they were next to the chariots.²⁶⁹ It is clear from Arrian that the chariots were stationed in front of the Bactrians and not to the side of them. Stationed alongside the Bactrians were detachments of Dahae and Arachosian cavalry, numbering 1,000 and 2,000 respectively. The Dahae were the most populous of the Saca peoples and almost certainly provided more than 1,000 troops in total; the rest were probably on the other flank along with some stationed in the centre with Darius. Curtius also positions the Massagetae alongside the Bactrians, but fails to give troop numbers.

Along from the Dahae were a unit of mixed cavalry and light infantry: perhaps Darius was learning from Alexander at Issus, where he stationed infantry with cavalry on his extreme right there, a group that quickly forced a crossing of the Pinarus. Along with this mixed unit were the Susian and Cadusian cavalry, each 2,000 strong. Completing the Persian left were, in front of the rest of that wing, 2,000 Scythians and 1,000 Bactrian cavalry along with 100 scythed chariots.²⁷⁰ Chariots were something of a return to a more ancient form of warfare; but Darius believed that they would give him a tactical advantage by breaking up the Macedonian lines. Darius should be commended, despite his failure, for attempting an innovative tactic, rather than simply relying on weight of numbers to win the day.

The right wing consisted of units from lowland Syria (more frequently referred to as Coele Syria) and Mesopotamia as well as the Medes. Slightly closer to the centre were the Parthians and Sacae as well as the Tapurian and Hyrcanian contingents; lastly the Albanians and Sacasinians. This is how Arrian describes the Persian right, without numerical values attached to each contingent. The units from Coele Syria and Mesopotamia were apparently brigaded together under the command of Mazaeus: they were presumably cavalry, although this is not explicitly stated, it can be inferred from their role and position.²⁷¹ The Medes were commanded by their satrap Atropates, and again we can safely assume they were cavalry. The Parthians and Sacae were mounted archers, an idea Alexander had not yet adopted, although he was to do so to great effect in Bactria and beyond. The Tapurians and Hyrcanians were both cavalry units, and units of some reputation, particularly the Hyrcanians. The mention of Albanians is puzzling, and only appears in Arrian; it is perhaps a mistranslation or misunderstanding on the part of Arrian, but we can only speculate. In front of this wing were also stationed an advance guard of Armenian and Cappadocian cavalry, along with 50 scythed chariots. No source gives numbers for the Persian right, but it is highly likely to have been the same as or very similar to the left; i.e. around, or perhaps slightly in excess of, 7,000.

The Persian centre was under the direct command of the Great King. Stationed with Darius were the Royal Kinsmen; these were an elite group of cavalry, probably 1,000 strong. They were of the highest Persian nobility, demonstrated by their exclusive right to kiss the king.²⁷² Along with the

cream of Persian nobility were the elite Persian infantry unit, the *melophoroi*; these were handpicked from the 10,000 Immortals, and distinguished by displaying golden apples on their spear butts. This is exactly the opposite of the Macedonian infantrymen whose sarissa had a large spear butt; this was partly to balance the weight and partly to allow it to be dug into the ground to brace against a charge by the enemy. With this inability to brace the spear against an enemy charge, the Persian *melophoroi* were ill equipped to resist a cavalry charge by an enemy. The Greek mercenary infantry, the strongest of the Persian front line infantry, but numbering only around 2,000 by this time because of successive losses in earlier campaigns; Darius did not find it easy to replenish the numbers.²⁷³ They were stationed to either side of the elite Persian units. The Greek mercenaries were positioned directly opposite the Macedonian heavy infantry, and were probably the only infantry at Darius' disposal capable of opposing them; their lack of numbers was a critical problem, however. The remainder of the Persian centre consisted of Indians, "stateless" Carians (who had been forcibly removed from Caria and resettled in central Asia) and Mardian archers.²⁷⁴ Forming a sort of second line, immediately behind these units were the Uxians, Babylonians, "troops of the Persian Gulf" and the Sitacenians. This second line is interesting. Arrian 3.11.5 uses the term *epitetagmenoi*; it is intended in the normal sense of posted behind as described. He goes on to use the term *eis bathos*: this is very rare in the pages of the *Anabasis*, occurring only four times in a tactical context. Elsewhere it is used to describe Alexander's phalanx depth against the Triballians; it evidently does not just mean stationed behind, but also refers to the significant depth of the formation. The second-line infantry were poor troops and, if Curtius is to be believed, largely useless as front-line troops.²⁷⁵

The reported numbers for the total strength of the Persian host vary wildly: Arrian gives 1,000,000 infantry, 40,000 cavalry, 200 scythed chariots and 15 elephants; Curtius gives 200,000 infantry and 45,000 cavalry; 1,000,000 is the total presented in Plutarch; and 800,000 infantry and 200,000 cavalry in Diodorus; Justin tells us of 400,000 infantry and 100,000 cavalry.²⁷⁶ The first thing to note is that the 200 scythed chariots in Arrian are perfectly plausible given the time Darius had to prepare and the resources at his disposal. We can also say with some certainty that the elephants were not present at Gaugamela; they are mentioned in the Persian order of battle, but do not appear to have actually taken any part in the battle itself, appearing in none of the battle narratives. Alexander, therefore, did not encounter elephants in battle until the Hydaspes. Apart from the chariots, most of our sources provide wildly exaggerated estimates, as was typical in the ancient world. The most plausible figures, however, are those provided by Curtius: 200,000 infantry and 45,000 cavalry are not unreasonable numbers, given that this was to be Darius' last stand and that he had had around two years to prepare, summoning contingents from what remained of

his empire.

The Battle of Gaugamela

The Macedonian tactics for the battle are complex and only discernible with hindsight. A simple examination of Macedonian dispositions does not reveal Alexander's thinking; the Persian tactics are simpler to understand, however. The Persian order of battle at Gaugamela was specifically designed to counteract the tactics that Alexander had employed at Issus (and indeed at the Granicus before that); there, Alexander had delivered the fatal blow with his right wing, and fought a defensive action on his left. Also, in the earlier set-piece battles Alexander had launched a smallscale initial attack to open the battle.

Stationed on the Persian left wing was an imposing force of cavalry, the forward units of which were Scythians and Bactrians, perhaps 3,000 strong. The intention of these units seems to have been to absorb Alexander's initial attack that was expected in that sector, if Issus was to be repeated by the Macedonians. This would also have the secondary effect of allowing the troops in the centre to deal with Alexander's heavy infantry without fear of being outflanked. Marsden notes that of the 200 scythed chariots available to Darius, fully half were stationed opposite the Macedonian right wing and only 50 opposite the centre, where we have such vivid descriptions of how the heavy infantry moved aside to make channels for them to advance through. Historically scythed chariots had not had great success against Greek heavy infantry; Darius evidently felt that they might have a more positive impact against cavalry.

The Persian tactic was evidently for the advance units of Scythians and Bactrians to absorb Alexander's initial attack on the right whilst Mazaeus would renew the battle with Parmenio and the Thessalians on the left that had been left unresolved at Issus. Darius knew that heavy infantry alone would not conquer the Persian Empire, even if they were intact after the battle; he also knew that his own infantry were not of the same calibre as the Macedonian.²⁷⁷ With this in mind, the Persians adopted a novel strategy: to rely almost exclusively on cavalry for victory. Persian success depended in part upon this new tactic coming as a surprise to Alexander; this was all but impossible to achieve given the possibility of Alexander viewing the Persian order of battle from a hill 5km away from the Persians' chosen ground. There was little Darius could do about this disadvantage; and he probably reasoned that being on a wide open plain, specially levelled to provide the greatest possible advantage, where his cavalry could theoretically have almost total freedom of movement would be sufficient.

In order to regain the tactical initiative, Alexander conducted a reconnaissance operation with the light infantry and Companion Cavalry to

“examine minutely the whole terrain where battle would be fought”.²⁷⁸ Darius did not attempt to counteract this operation, perhaps because he was set in position upon the battlefield and did not wish to be drawn out by Alexander; perhaps also his army was not sufficiently trained or disciplined to be able to launch an unplanned counter-attack at such short notice whilst still maintaining control. After his inspection of the Persian positions and the battlefield, Alexander returned to his camp and ordered his men to stand down for the night. Darius on the other hand instructed his men to stand at arms all through the night, lest the Macedonians launch a night attack. A night attack, which we hear Parmenio advocating, is probably a later invention, as is frequently the case with how our sources treat Parmenio. Standing at arms before a battle was standard practice for Persian armies. In this specific instance, given that Darius could not retire to a safe location, it was probably not an original mistake of Darius.²⁷⁹ Ordering his men to stand down in this manner so close to the enemy seems like a tremendous risk on the part of Alexander; he was gambling that the Persians would not be interested in a pre-emptive night attack. As so often in his career his gamble paid off: although we do not hear of fatigue in the battle, it undoubtedly played a part in the Persian defeat.

Although the Greeks were stood down that night, Alexander did not rest. Curtius tells us that he was up late into the night studying and calculating Persian strength and Persian dispositions in order to determine his tactical plan for the coming battle.²⁸⁰

Alexander's inspection tour the day before the battle would have made him acutely aware that the Persians were very strong in cavalry on their left, his typical initial target. They had perhaps 19,000 cavalry in this sector with Alexander being able to muster probably only 3,500 at most. It is highly likely that he toyed with the idea of transferring his main attack to the centre or his left, as Curtius suggests, but ultimately rejected the plan.²⁸¹ After all the deliberations, Alexander appears to have decided upon the same basic strategy that he had used at the Granicus and Issus: to draw the Persians out onto ground of his choosing and then, at the optimal moment, launch his counter-attack. This would involve, as before, essentially the sacrifice of some troops in order to achieve the desired result, but Alexander had no qualms about that.

On the day of the battle, Alexander drew up his line in a remarkably similar manner to his dispositions at Issus two years previously; there were a couple of key differences, however.²⁸² The creation of powerful flank guards at either end of the line was an innovation, one that would help protect against an outflanking action by a massively larger enemy. The flank guard on the right is of particular interest; it was designed to perform two tasks. The first was to draw out as much of Bessus' cavalry as it could and to hold them in battle for as long as possible. Secondly they were to protect the Companion Cavalry until the opportune moment came for the counter-attack.

The left flank was set up in a similar manner but with no real intention of a Thessalian counter-attack on a grand scale. The left flank guard was to fight a holding action as always.

Before marching to battle Alexander addressed the officers, with instructions that the address be passed on to the men:²⁸³

Let him but remind them each for himself to preserve discipline in the hour of danger – to advance, when called upon to do so, in utter silence; to watch the time for a hearty cheer, and, when the moment came, to roar out their battle-cry and put the fear of God into the enemy's hearts. All must obey orders promptly and pass them on without hesitation to their men; and, finally, every one of them must remember that upon the conduct of each depended the fate of all: if each man attended to his duty, success was assured; if one man neglected it, the whole army would be in peril.

We can infer from this speech that Alexander had a general tactic; but by reminding the commanders, and thus the men, to watch out for changes in orders that should be executed rapidly, it seems that Alexander expected to make changes during the battle.

The following morning, 30 September, Alexander led the Macedonian host to the battlefield. Initially the Macedonians left a considerable overlap to their left flank, so much so that the Companion Cavalry were opposite the Persian centre; this can have been no accident as Alexander had spent a considerable amount of time the previous day examining the Persian positions that evidently had not moved overnight. What this deployment appears to have been was the first stage in attempting to lure the Persians out of their set positions: Persian discipline held, however, and they did not move. Alexander's second attempt to force the Persians' hand was a now famous movement to his right. Arrian tells us that this was countered by a similar move from the Persians: evidently they did not wish to use the tactical advantage offered by the initial overlap, but nor were they prepared to lose it. We could infer from the text of Arrian that there was no change in the relative positions of the two armies, but this would be a mistake.²⁸⁴ Even though both were moving in the same direction, it would have taken the Persians some time to see Alexander's movement, analyse it, and pass orders to individual units to move in a similar fashion; thus Alexander would have considerably reduced the overlap by the time the Persians reacted. This must have been the case given that later in the battle Mazaeus easily encircled the Thessalians on Alexander's left, indicating that they had moved a considerable distance relative to the Persian lines.²⁸⁵

Whilst it seems certain that Darius attempted to maintain some kind of overlap on the Macedonian right we must ask why? The frontage of his army was such that wherever the Macedonians set up he would have a massive overlap on one side or the other, or both; why did he wish to maintain the

initial starting position? Darius would no doubt have expected Alexander to launch his main attack from the Macedonian right where he was stationed with the Companion Cavalry; this is what had happened at Issus and would have been a reasonable supposition. If Darius did indeed assume this, then he would have wanted to maintain as massive a numerical superiority in that sector as possible to counter the expected assault. After both armies had been moving in the same direction for a time, towards a group of foothills, and away from the ground that had been specially prepared by the Persians, Darius evidently ordered a stop. We do not know this directly, nor with certainty, but when Darius launched his general advance, beginning with the chariots, we can assume that the army would have been stationary first. After the Persians had stopped marching, Alexander continued to the right, thus gaining ground both at the start of his movement, before the Persians could react, and at the end, as the Persians launched their assault.

Before this general Persian assault began, however, Darius ordered his advance guard on the left to circle around to the side of the Macedonian right wing and stop their lateral march toward the foothills. This advance guard consisted of the 1,000 Bactrian cavalry and the 2,000 Scythian Massagetae.²⁸⁶ Darius was afraid that, if Alexander continued his movement towards the foothills and away from the prepared ground, his scythed chariots and advantage in cavalry could be nullified. The first round of tactical sparring was won by Alexander: he had enticed the Persians out of their prepared positions. As soon as Alexander saw the Persians make a move he ordered Menidas and the mercenary cavalry, only a few hundred strong, to counter-attack the 3,000 enemy cavalry.²⁸⁷

Alexander continued his advance towards the Persian right until he was almost clear of the area which the Persians had levelled during the previous days. Darius knew that once the Macedonians reached rough ground his chariots would be useless, so he ordered the mounted troops in advance of his left to encircle the Macedonian right under Alexander and thus check and further extension in that direction. Alexander promptly ordered Menidas and his mercenary cavalry to attack them.

Alexander did not expect these few troops to rout the Persians: they were a pawn sacrifice in exactly the same manner as at the Granicus and Issus; they were intended to draw the enemy forward and force them to commit themselves, placing them in a position where he could counter-attack with larger numbers and greater quality troops. As expected, Menidas was quickly driven from the field of battle, it is likely that his men did not fight with particular vigour, but they did perform their function. This could have been an intended retreat, of course, in order to preserve their numbers for future battles and to further draw the Persians forward in greater disorder. Arrian describes their retreat:²⁸⁸

A counter attack by the Scythian cavalry and their supporting Bactrians drove them back by weight of numbers.

At this point the text of Arrian becomes difficult to interpret. He seems to imply that there were three stages to the cavalry battle on the right: Menidas' failed counter-attack, the reinforcement by the Paeonians, and finally Aretes' attack with the *prodromoi*. The more likely interpretation of the text is that there were two stages: after the repulse of Menidas, Alexander ordered a charge by the *prodromoi* of Aretes and Ariston's Paeonians, supported by the veteran mercenary infantry of Cleander. This second counter-attack by the Macedonians met with far greater success, largely because it employed greater numbers of higher quality troops. As this was becoming apparent to Darius, Bessus, his left wing commander, ordered the remainder of the Bactrian and Saca Scythian cavalry, perhaps some 8,000 strong, to engage the Macedonians.²⁸⁹ The fighting was hard and the Macedonians suffered heavy losses against the armoured Saca horsemen.

These Saca cavalry, which both Arrian and Curtius describe as wearing chain mail on both the horse and rider, originated in the region south of the Aral Sea some time during the 6th century. This practice seems to have originated with them, although the Assyrians also developed such cavalry independently. Initially these cavalry seem to have specialized in either lance or bow, but by the 4th century they were proficient with both. Alexander was evidently so impressed by these horsemen that by 327 he incorporated them into his army. They later formed the basis of the Seleucid cataphracts.

At this point in the battle, around 11,000 Persian cavalry were being held back, perhaps with great difficulty, by 1,100 Macedonian light cavalry and 6,700 mercenary infantry.²⁹⁰ Despite the discrepancy in defensive armour, however, the Macedonian cavalry held their own against superior numbers. Arrian tells us of repeated cavalry charges by Bessus, indicating that the battle on the Macedonian right was lengthy and perhaps that the Persian defeat was more to do with demoralization after Darius fled than a military defeat. Arrian tells us:²⁹¹

A close cavalry action ensued, in which the Macedonians suffered the more severely, outnumbered as they were and less adequately provided with defensive armour than the Scythians were – both horses and men. None the less the Macedonians held their attacks, and by repeated counter-charges, squadron by squadron, succeeded in breaking the enemy formation.

Curtius mentions the possibility of treason on the part of Bessus; it seems unlikely in the heat of battle that an enemy commander could negotiate a treaty and if it had been organized before the battle, then why fight at all, why not simply change sides? Curtius is no doubt right to say Bessus was ambitious, but it is a long way from ambition to outright treason.²⁹²

The battle on the right culminated in a final charge by the Macedonians. Arrian here is not using Macedonian in the ethnically specific sense (i.e. they were not the Companion Cavalry), but as a generalization for troops within the Macedonian order of battle.²⁹³ The troops that held and then ultimately repulsed Bessus were the mercenaries, *prodromoi* and Paeonians as described above.

At some point which remains unclear, some of Mazaeus' cavalry on the Persian right broke through the Macedonian lines. Arrian describes breaking through the centre, whilst Curtius has 1,000 cavalry being ordered to ride around Alexander's extreme left to "plunder the enemy's baggage". Curtius here has a message sent to Alexander with news of this action and a request for orders: this is not a request for assistance as is assumed by some, but an alteration to the plan to which Parmenio felt himself unable to adjust. Alexander's response was to ignore the raid, as if they were to "win this battle we shall not only recover our own baggage but also capture the enemy's".²⁹⁴

Arrian's text is also problematic: a breakthrough in the centre (and at the very end of the battle) presents a number of difficulties. Any breakthrough that reached the baggage train would have to pass through the second, reserve phalanx, and this does not seem to have occurred. Indeed, the reserve phalanx only learned about the breakthrough when the baggage train was being looted. Alexander's baggage was also some distance to the rear, some 6km (30 stades). A second problem is that Arrian has the Indians and Persian cavalry fleeing in defeat, but the camp was no longer in a direct line behind the Macedonians because of Alexander's rightward movement before the battle. These fleeing cavalry, then, are supposed to have regained their composure, despite the battle being over and Darius already in flight, in order to attack the guarded Macedonian camp. We can only conclude that Arrian is wrong in the timing of the breakthrough: it was not at the end of the battle but earlier, as in Curtius, and also in the direction of the Indian and Persian cavalry. The camp was 6km away and thus not an easy or tempting target for any cavalry units that did manage to break through; we can therefore only conclude direct orders for the camp to be assaulted, again as in Curtius, the intention no doubt being an attempt to recover Darius' family.²⁹⁵

This initial fighting was a significant tactical victory for Alexander: the cavalry of Bessus had been charged with defeating Alexander's right flank, and yet that had failed to break through even the flank guard. This essentially gave the Companion Cavalry free rein to attack the Persians without having to fight a way through the heavily armed Scythian cavalry. Alexander's tactic, oft repeated, of luring the enemy onto ground, and into a position, of his choosing had again proved a success.

At the same time as this cavalry action was being fought, Darius launched

a second assault directed at the Macedonian right; one hundred scythed chariots were sent against the Companion Cavalry.²⁹⁶ The intention is obvious, to cripple the horses and render Alexander's finest units useless. The assault was evidently an attempt at a two-pronged attack by Darius, the cavalry circling to attack from the flank and the chariots from the front.²⁹⁷ This assault proved equally ineffective; the chariots were routed by Balacrus' javelin-men and the remaining half of the Agrianians that had been stationed in front of the Companion Cavalry to act as a screen. At the same time as this chariot assault was launched against the Companions, two smaller assaults, each by 50 chariots, were made against the heavy infantry in the centre and Parmenio on the left. Curtius confuses the assault on the centre with that on the Macedonian right, but nevertheless gives us a valuable insight into the battle. Curtius describes the following:

Some were killed by the spears that projected well beyond the chariot-poles and others dismembered by the scythes set on either side. It was no gradual withdrawal that the Macedonians made but a disordered flight, breaking their ranks.

Curtius also describes the chariot assault on the "front line". This is evidently the skirmishing troops as he later describes:²⁹⁸

After causing havoc in Alexander's front lines, the chariots had now charged the phalanx, and the Macedonians received the charge with a firm resolve, permitting them to penetrate to the middle of the column. Their formation resembled a rampart; after creating an unbroken line of spears, they stabbed the flanks of horses from both sides as they charged recklessly ahead.

The commonly held view, and the more likely explanation, is that the infantry simply moved out of the way of the chariots; to have moved far enough to stab the horses in each of their sides with a sarissa some 5.5m long would have meant creating a series of perhaps 15m gaps in the line: this seems unlikely in the heat of battle. It is much more plausible to assume a smaller gap without the heavy infantry being able to use their sarissa. Either way, the Macedonians evidently had more difficulty with the chariots than Arrian has led us to believe.

The use of scythed chariots by Darius against the Companion Cavalry could have been disastrous for Alexander, but the ease with which they were dealt with demonstrates Alexander's close attention to detail. Alexander must have taken note the previous day of the location of the chariots, noting fully half of the total number stationed on the Persian left, and immediately formulating a plan as to how to counter their use. Given that, even in the centre where they had some limited and evidently shortterm impact, because we know that the heavy infantry recovered enough to form part of the wedge that attacked the Persians, and to assault the Persian centre. This action also

clearly demonstrates that the chariot's day as a key unit on the battlefield was over.

It seems from the text of Arrian that Alexander had not yet ordered his centre to advance: "as Alexander moved forward the Persians sent their scythed chariots against him".²⁹⁹ This seems to imply a movement by Alexander and the Companion Cavalry, not the infantry.³⁰⁰ From Darius' vantage point it would have appeared as though the Companion Cavalry were engaged as well as the flank guard. It would also have appeared that he had a good overlap on probably both sides making a flanking manoeuvre very feasible. I would add that from Alexander's perspective, the battle was also going very well indeed. He had managed to entice the Persian cavalry on his right into attacking, sacrificing only a small band of non-Macedonian cavalry in the process. He had also managed to contain this charge without using his elite Companion Cavalry; and he had successfully dealt with the potentially dangerous scythed chariots, with no casualties at all.

Riding high, as Darius evidently felt he was, he ordered a general advance. This would not only have consisted of the infantry in the centre; Mazaeus also advanced upon Parmenio and the Thessalians, and Bessus no doubt used ever more cavalry against Alexander's right.³⁰¹ Once the general Persian advance had started, Alexander immediately ordered Aretes to attack the 2,000 cavalry (1,000 Dahae and 1,000 Arachosians) that were moving forward to support Bessus. This had the effect of taking even more of the Persian cavalry out of the battle by tying them up against the flank guard now supported by Aretes. Once these extra Persian cavalry had been committed, and neutralized by Aretes, Darius had around 5,000 cavalry remaining that were not yet engaged. Alexander had, therefore, by the quite brilliant plan of luring the Persians out of their initial position, reduced the odds against the Companions from around 5:1 to a much more palatable 5:2; whilst also preventing the encirclement of his right flank by using essentially only the flank guards.³⁰²

Bessus' initial orders had been to halt the Macedonian lateral movement, which he had done. In order to achieve this, however, he had to attack the Macedonians not from the front, but from the side. This had necessitated Bessus breaking rank with the Persian centre, thus allowing a gap to form in the Persian line. The general movements that had occurred to this point in the battle had led to Alexander's army, in all likelihood, being at an oblique angle to the Persians with the left refused and the right advanced. Alexander now seized the opportunity and wheeled his Companions. He made a series of wedge formations (this delta-shaped wedge formation had been borrowed from the Scythians by Philip II), and charged straight for the gap.³⁰³

Darius now brought into action the main body of his infantry, and an order was sent to Aretes to attack the Persian cavalry which was trying to outflank and surround the Macedonian right. For a time

Alexander continued to advance in column; presently, however, the movement of the Persian cavalry, sent to the support of their comrades who were attempting to encircle the Macedonian right, left a gap in the Persian front, and this was Alexander's opportunity. He promptly made for the gap, and, with his Companions and all of the heavy infantry in that sector of the line, drove in his wedge and raising a battle-cry pressed forward at the double straight for the point where Darius stood.

The right wing of Alexander's charge was covered by the Agrianians and archers, again at an oblique angle, who were fresh from dealing with the Persian scythed chariots. Also present were the hypaspists and the *pezhetairoi* from Polyperchon and those to his right. Only those *taxeis* of Polyperchon and Craterus did not charge towards the gap, or more accurately charge at an oblique angle towards the Persian centre and the gap that had developed with the left.

Curtius tells us that the Persian line on the left was thinner than the rest of the Persian front, because of the detachment of Bessus' cavalry. They were perhaps still in the process of reorganizing themselves to attempt to maintain some kind of link with Bessus as Alexander struck. Alexander's charge evidently left him deep within Persian ranks, and he was surrounded by the enemy. Alexander's charge had separated him from his supporting infantry units, and he was only saved when the Agrianians caught up to his position. Curtius tells us:³⁰⁴

The Persians on the left wing, however, positioned themselves to his rear as he fought, hoping that he could be boxed in. He would have faced terrible danger, pinned in the middle as he was, had not the Agrianian cavalry come galloping to assault the Persians surrounding the king and forced them to turn towards them by cutting into their rear. There was confusion on both sides. Alexander had the Persians before and behind him.

Curtius mistakenly (twice) calls these Agrianians cavalymen: they can only have been the famous light infantry units as we have no positive evidence at all of them being employed as mounted troops.

The situation in Alexander's sector was now extremely confused. The Companion Cavalry were under attack on all sides, having charged the Persian left centre. Those Persians that were behind Alexander were now also being attacked from behind by the Agrianians and other light infantry units; meanwhile Bessus' cavalry were still fully engaged, except for those that had broken loose to attack the Macedonian baggage train.

We are given next to no details of the fighting in the centre involving the *pezhetairoi*, but we can draw a number of conclusions. We do know that this engagement occurred after Alexander's entry into the battle; and we get the

impression from the sources that it did not take the Companion Cavalry too long to break through on the right and engage Darius directly in his flank. The *pezhetairoi*, therefore, were not engaged for long. This would have been Alexander's intention; the Macedonian heavy infantry were nothing like a traditional hoplite phalanx in that they were not heavily encumbered by body armour. The Macedonian *pezhetairoi* relied heavily upon their sarissa as a first strike weapon; they expected to roll over the enemy like a modern tank. Any gap that opened in the line was a serious blow as it meant the enemy could engage a relatively undefended soldier. Alexander's heavy infantry were not a defensive unit; they were a strike weapon in exactly the same way as the Companions. The basis of Alexander's tactics was always for himself and the Companions to break through on the right, and wheel against the enemy centre, at about the same time as the *pezhetairoi* hit them from the front. The combined strike force of both was irresistible. If for any reason the flanking attack of the Companions was delayed then the heavy infantry would begin to struggle after the initial shock.

Arrian's narrative passes from Alexander being hard pressed on the right to Darius' rout in a matter of only a couple of lines.³⁰⁵ The description of the cavalry battle bears significant similarities to that at the Granicus and is almost formulaic in feel: the brief mention of the bristling sarissas of the heavy infantry adding irresistible weight is perhaps modelled on Homer.³⁰⁶ Arrian has Darius turning tail at almost the first sign of difficulty, claiming that he was "the first to turn and flee." The vulgate tradition, however, has an epic, almost Homeric-style duel of hand-to-hand combat which resulted in Darius' driver being killed. Diodorus recounts:³⁰⁷

The Persian king received their attack and fighting from a chariot hurled javelins against his opponents, and many supported him. As the kings approached each other, Alexander flung a javelin at Darius and missed him, but struck the driver standing beside him and knocked him to the ground.

Only at that point did the Great King flee the battlefield. Plutarch gives the most reasonable and reasoned account of Darius' flight, claiming that he only fled when the situation was desperate and the battle lost, mobility also being hampered by the infantry in the centre who were already in flight.³⁰⁸ Plutarch should here be accepted at the expense of the other traditions for several reasons. Darius was a significant military figure in his own right and had proved himself an able commander before the war with Macedon; bearing this in mind it seems unlikely that he would flee at the first sign of battle. The vulgate tradition is obviously far too Homeric and formulaic to be trusted as fact; only Plutarch has a seemingly reasoned picture of a battle that was hard fought with the defeated monarch fleeing the field once the battle was lost.

In his sector, Bessus was evidently also in flight, as described by

The outflanking party on the Macedonian right was also broken up by the powerful assault of Aretes' men.

Given the strength of Bessus' forces, it seems unlikely that the Macedonian flank guards would have routed them so easily; it is more likely that they would only have fled when they saw Darius doing the same. The view that Bessus must have been assaulted by a more formidable force than just the flank guards has merit, but is unsupported by the evidence. The second force could only have been the Companion Cavalry wheeling right as they passed the gap in the Persian line, rather than left to attack Darius. It is inconceivable that Alexander, when faced with the choice of attacking the flanking troops or attacking the Great King, would have steered away from Darius. We can further argue that Alexander's whole tactic was to attack the Persian centre from two directions simultaneously, and with the heavy infantry either engaged, or about to engage the Persian centre, he could not afford a delay in mopping up the Persian left, if the battle was to be won. There is also no hint of his proposed attack against Bessus in Arrian. It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that the battle on the Macedonian right was hard fought and only won when Bessus saw Darius in flight and thus decided that there was no reason to continue.

The general Persian rout on the right and in the centre is described graphically by Curtius:³¹⁰

The Macedonians wandered around like people in the dark, converging only when they recognized a voice or heard a signal. But they could hear the sound of reins time and time again lashing the chariot horses, the only trace they had of the fleeing king.

Ancient battles would often have been fought in such circumstances, with little visibility or opportunity for communication. The geographical areas in which Alexander fought, largely in extremely dry regions of Persia, would have meant that this was a ubiquitous problem. Many of the areas where Alexander fought campaigns were bone dry for large parts of the year, and any activity on the ground, such as marching or the movement of horses, would have thrown up considerable amounts of dust into the atmosphere. This dust would have had the effect of massively reducing visibility to the point where directing a battle for anyone would have been almost impossible. Alexander would have had to rely upon his commanders knowing their responsibilities under the tactical plan and executing their orders precisely. Communication would have been facilitated by cavalry messengers carrying messages from one sector of the battlefield to another: this is demonstrated by the plea for help from Parmenio towards the end of the battle of Gaugamela, assuming it occurred.

The Hydaspes River is perhaps Alexander's only major battle where this

problem would not have been encountered, given the monsoon rain and the resulting mud at the time of the battle. Given these conditions of limited visibility and communication, it is easy to see how panic could spread quickly in such circumstances. Generals relied heavily upon competent sub-commanders and the discipline of their troops for victory.

Much like the battle in the centre, we know little about the detail of the action on the Macedonian left. We do know that the fighting was harsh, as everywhere else on the battlefield, with little quarter given by either side. Curtius tells us that “the fortunes of the battle were very different for both sides” from those on the right or in the centre.

Mazaeus, the Persian commander in that sector, conducted a vigorous and violent charge against Parmenio with all of the cavalry at his disposal. Mazaeus was attempting to encircle Alexander's left wing utilising his numerical superiority, leaving Parmenio in a desperate position when he sent a plea for help to Alexander.³¹¹

All of our sources agree that a plea for help was sent, and that it occurred at this juncture in the battle, but the method of delivery, and Alexander's response, is far from clear.³¹² Arrian tells us that Alexander turned back from his pursuit, decided that the Persians were in retreat and proceeded to resume his pursuit of Darius. This, as has often been noted, is unrealistic: if Alexander was in full pursuit of the Great King it is difficult to conceive how an exhausted Thessalian cavalryman could have caught up with him in order to deliver the message. It could be that Alexander did not pursue Darius immediately but stayed to help out his right wing, or perhaps that there was some kind of prearranged signal; both are unlikely to be true.

Plutarch tells us of Alexander's pursuit and his annoyance upon receiving the message from Parmenio; he also notes Alexander's decision to hide the truth of their abandonment of the pursuit from the men, blaming the failing light.³¹³ The failing light is also an indication that the battle lasted for quite some time: no doubt the preliminaries took up a considerable part of the day with the battle commencing early afternoon. We also know that the battle started late because of Alexander being late to rise on this occasion. The descriptions of the battle that we have do not allow for a battle lasting all day. Curtius tells a similar story of the message only reaching Alexander when he was some way from the battlefield; again Alexander halts his pursuit in order to return.³¹⁴ He also tells us that Alexander had reached the river Lycus before he turned back, after protests from his men to press the pursuit; Curtius also mentions failing light. Curtius adds that he turned back because he *believed* that Parmenio was in trouble; although how he could have come to *believe* this without any actual evidence in the form of a message is not explained. The only real possibility is that Alexander knew how outnumbered Parmenio was and speculated that he could only hold out for a short period, and thus Alexander perhaps believed that he had a narrow

window of opportunity to pursue Darius before Parmenio's situation became critical. This sits well with Diodorus' claim that the message was never delivered presumably because Alexander was some distance away, and with my own interpretation of a message only being delivered once Alexander was returning to the battlefield.³¹⁵

Many have found Diodorus' account of the message not having been delivered convincing, especially since Arrian's version presents a number of significant problems. Arrian's account clearly implies two pursuits, the second of which lasted until nightfall: there is a hint of two separate pursuit incidents in Curtius, but this is not explicitly stated. Curtius actually states:³¹⁶

Alexander instantibus suis ne impune abeuntem hostem
intermitteret sequi, hebetia esse tela et manus fatigates tantoque
curso corpora exhausta et praeceps in noctem diei tempus causatus
est, re vera de laevo cornu, quod adhuc in acie stare credebat,
sollicitus, reverti ad ferendam opem suis statuit.

Alexander does turn back, but there is no explicit mention by Curtius of it being “for the first time”; however, all of our sources at least hint at two pursuits of Darius, the first aborted in order to provide assistance to Parmenio, the second a more concerted effort.

I would argue that the most plausible version of the story is for Alexander to have immediately pursued the fleeing Darius, but to have called off the chase as the hour became late. Note that I am assuming an error in Arrian as to the timing of the ending of the first pursuit; Alexander being forced to turn back to help an imperilled Parmenio fits well with the anti-Parmenio strand that occurs in Arrian. Presenting Parmenio as less than competent (in failing to initially secure his own area of the field), the argument becomes even more effective if Alexander was given little chance of catching Darius (i.e. having to turn back before nightfall); no blame could be assigned to him for failing if he had to break off the pursuit so quickly.

As he was returning to the battlefield, and presumably after a brief but bloody battle with a band of retreating Persian cavalry, the messenger from Parmenio reached him, but by the time he returned the battle was long over, Mazaeus having fled with the rest of the Persian army.³¹⁷ The following day, a second concerted pursuit of Darius began, no doubt better organized and with a greater number of troops. Thus Parmenio's message was delivered, but some time after it was sent; in the intervening period Parmenio managed to hold, and ultimately win the battle on the left. There were, therefore, two pursuits of the Great King, one on the day of battle that failed to capture him, the second the following day.

Rhodes presents a counter argument that no message was sent at all from Parmenio to Alexander. He argues that in the confusion of a *mêlée* of 200,000 or more men, along with the dust that that would have generated,

there was no way that a message could possibly have reached Alexander. I do not disagree with this point, in general terms; but it assumes that the message would have been sent during the height of the battle, when Alexander was preparing to pursue Darius, or during that pursuit. I have tried to argue that the message would only have reached Alexander a little later than this, when he had already given up the pursuit and was returning towards the battlefield. Given that only a few cavalry accompanied Alexander on the pursuit of Darius, these would not have generated much dust, and Alexander would have been perfectly visible on his return journey, as most of the fighting (and thus the dust it generated) was over by that time.³¹⁸

Casualties

It is usually the case, as it is at Gaugamela, that the vulgate tradition gives higher casualty figures than does Arrian. Arrian tells us that there were “at most” 100 dead on the Macedonian side; that this figure cannot be true hardly needs to be said. Diodorus gives a figure of 500 dead and very many wounded, with Curtius claiming less than 300 losses.³¹⁹ Arrian even gives us solid grounds for rejecting his estimate; he tells us that sixty Companions fell in the final exchange, on Alexander's return from the pursuit. He also tells us that over 1,000 Macedonian horses died in battle or of fatigue during the pursuit. Alexander must have suffered considerably more than only forty losses in the vicious fighting on both the left and right; Arrian even tells us that Alexander suffered greater losses than the Bactrians. The highest, and we must assume most reasonable, figure is from the Oxyrhynchus Historian who states 1,200 Macedonian dead.³²⁰

As far as Persian losses are concerned we see the same story as in every battle: massively inflated casualty figures; for Arrian, 300,000; for Diodorus, 90,000; Curtius, 40,000; and the Oxyrhynchus Historian, 53,000.³²¹ These figures are as unbelievable as those of the Macedonians, and are similar in order of magnitude to Issus.

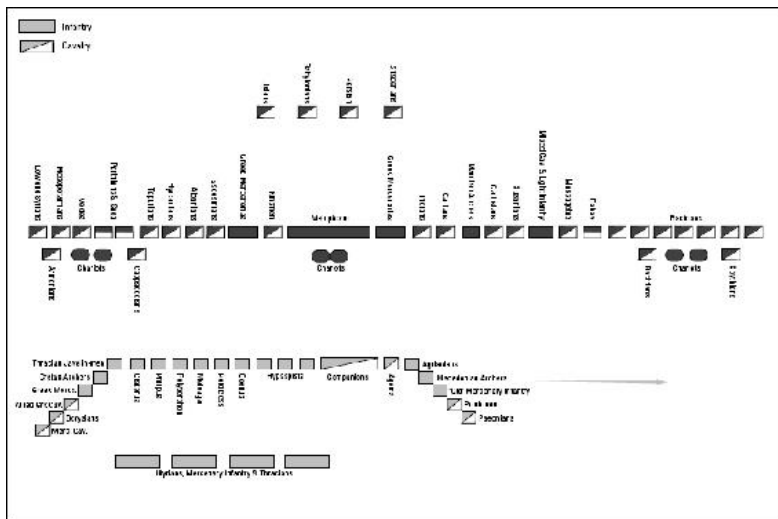
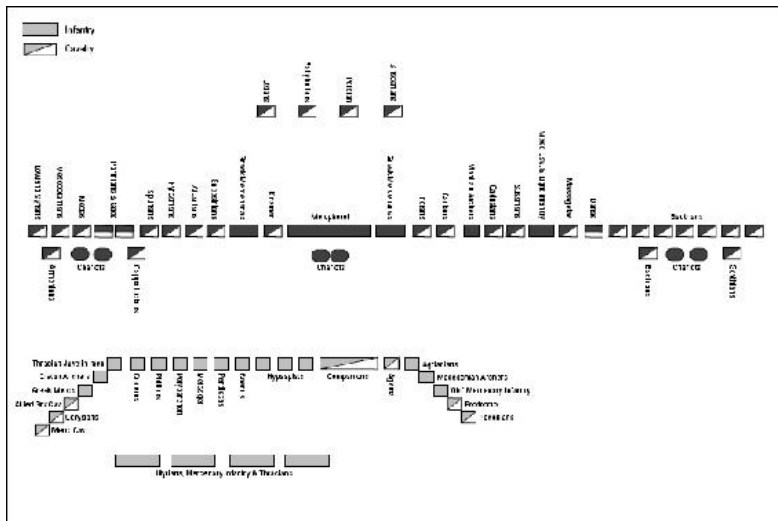
Conclusion

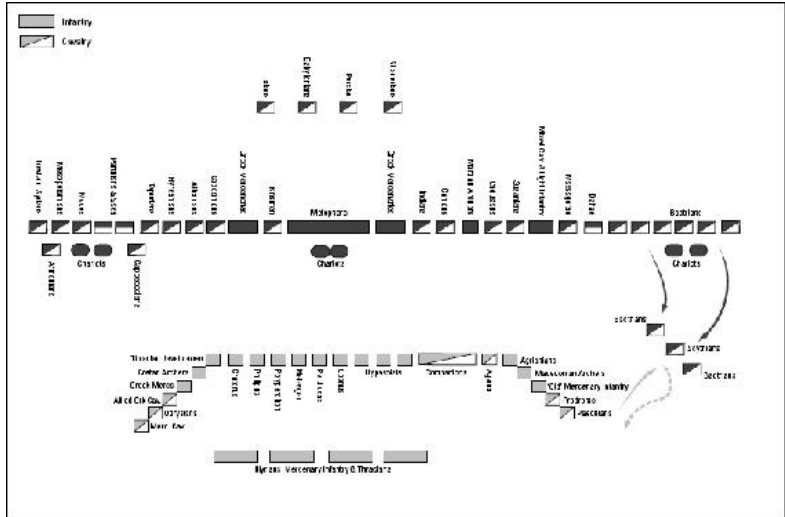
Gaugamela shows Alexander's tactical brilliance; he encountered a vastly superior army on a wide open plain that had been specially levelled in order to take advantage of the Great King's numerical superiority. Alexander shows himself not to be the rash gambler so often described, but a cool and level-headed tactician. He assessed the battlefield and studied the enemy positions the day before the battle, and developed a tactic specific to the situation, albeit with some key hallmarks.

His initial assessment of the Persian position clearly showed that it would be difficult, if not impossible, for him to implement his preferred pincer movement against the enemy centre. The Persian left was simply too big and too strong for him to force his way through it and wheel on the centre to coincide with his infantry attack. His solution was brilliant, to set up his army too far to the left deliberately, to allow the Persians a massive overlap on his right. Once he was set up in this position he began moving to the right, towards a group of foothills, knowing that Darius must act to stop him. In any attempt to stop Alexander's movement, Darius would have to use a significant proportion of his left flank cavalry. Anticipating that this would have to occur, Alexander created two powerful flank guards, as well as a second line in case of encirclement, that would be charged with engaging the enemy and essentially taking them out of the battle. Once the Persian left wing cavalry were removed from the Persian order of battle, Alexander was free to execute his preferred strategy with devastating results; the combined infantry and cavalry attack of the Persian centre ended the battle quickly.

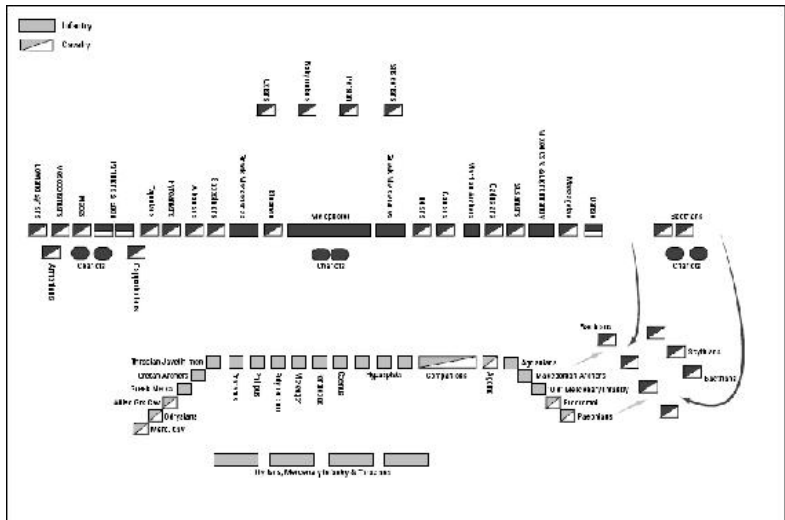
One clarification does need to be made: Alexander's sacrifice of Menidas' mercenary cavalry. Devine views it as "irresponsible" to throw a small unit of cavalry against a vastly superior one; but this is to miss the point of what Alexander was trying to achieve.³²² The purpose of sending Menidas' cavalry forward was to entice the enemy out of their formation and into an engagement that would see the cavalry on Darius' left effectively removed from the battle, and free the Companions to penetrate through the gap that was formed. Some may condemn Alexander for wilfully sacrificing a unit of his troops in this way, but there was a clear aim. Alexander had done exactly the same at the Granicus and Issus, and this kind of pawn sacrifice can be considered one of Alexander's hallmarks.³²³

Darius' generalship is often unappreciated: his own strategy was perfectly sound; he attempted to encircle the Macedonians in order to attack them in several directions at once. This was a perfectly reasonable strategy, but needed time to be effective, time that Alexander's charge at the head of the Companion Cavalry did not allow. His use of chariots was a reasonable gamble, and could have been devastating, but in reality did little. The great failing on the part of the Persians was not in generalship, but in allowing a gap to develop between the centre and the left; the Persians did not possess enough quality infantry to maintain a cohesive link. This is a role that would have been played by the hypaspists of Alexander, but the Persians possessed only 3,000 quality infantry, the Greek mercenaries left over from Issus.

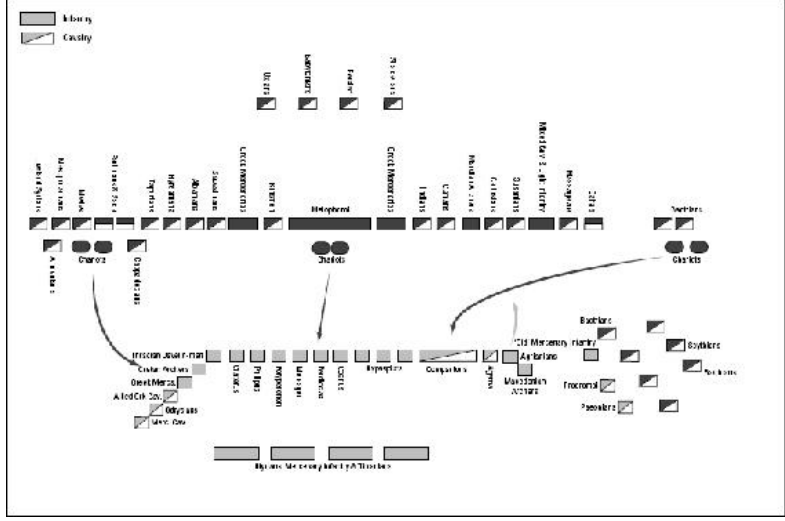




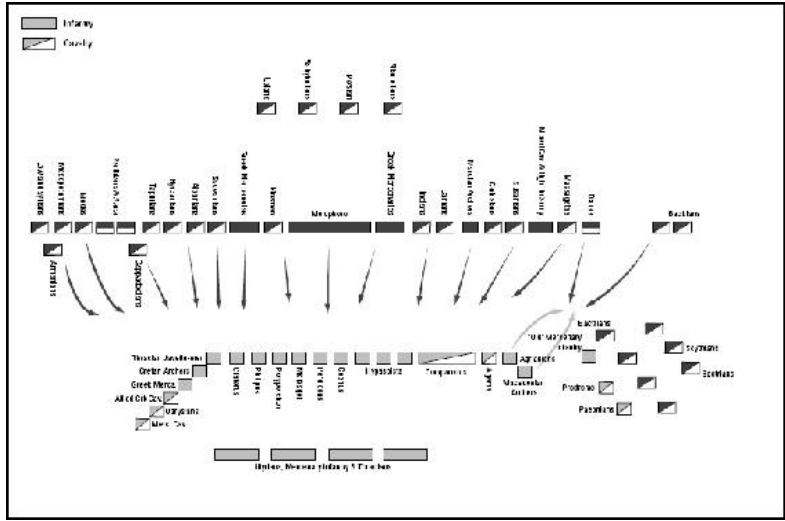
16. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 3



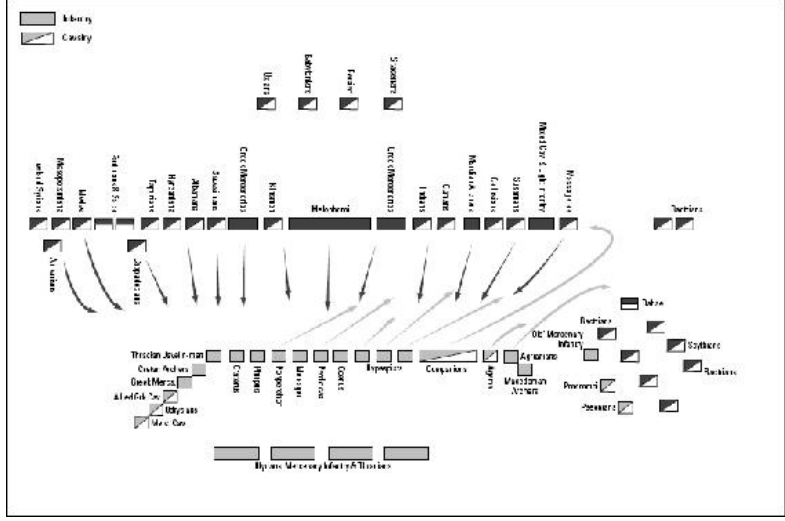
17. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 4



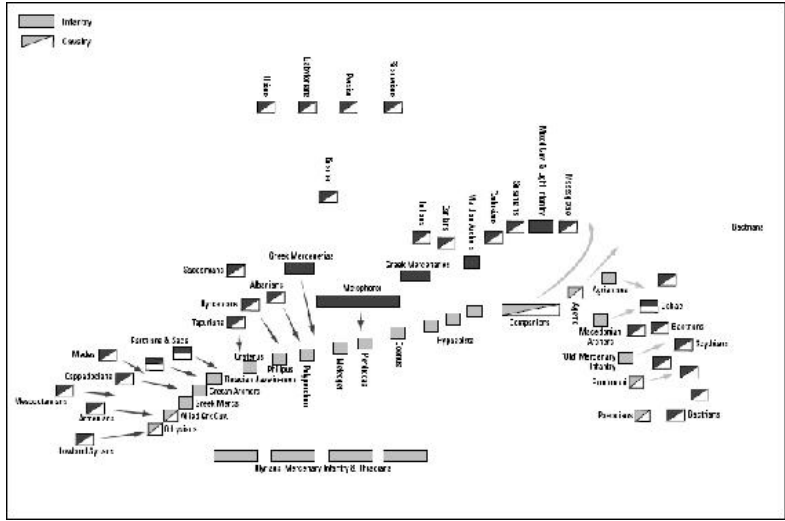
18. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 5



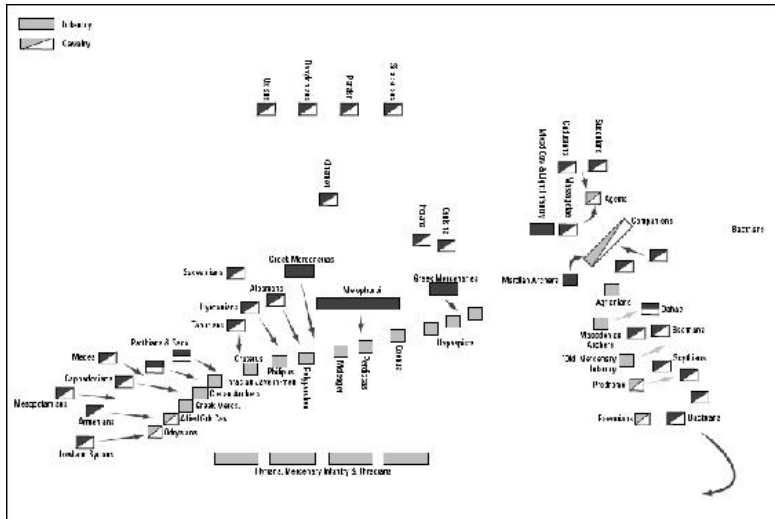
19. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 6



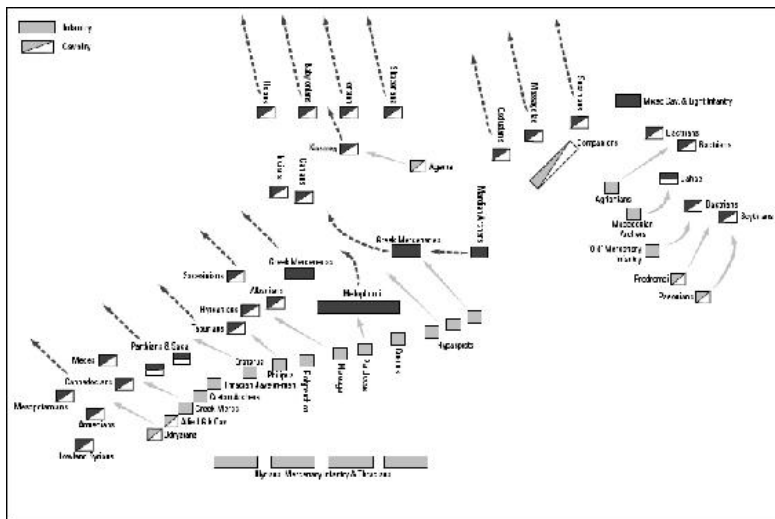
20. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 7



21. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 8



22. The Battle of Gaugamela, Phase 9



Chapter Seven

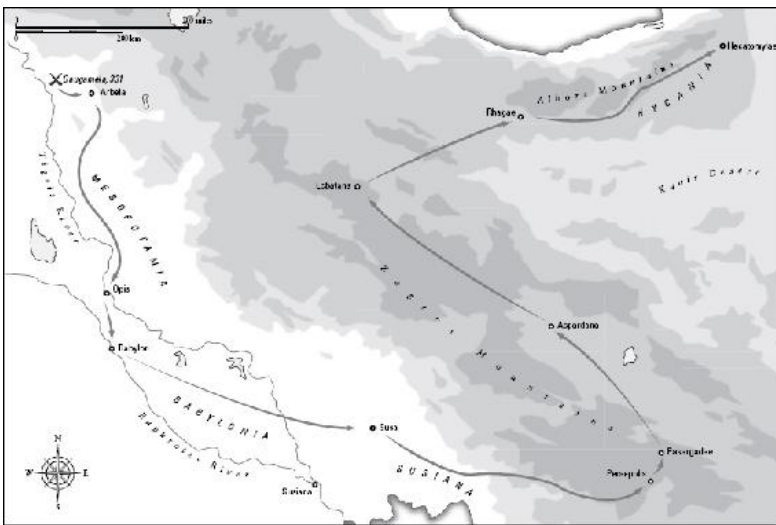
The Northeast Frontier, 330–327

Victory at Gaugamela also brought the defeat of the Persian Empire. The elimination of the Persians as a military threat left the great cities of Susa, Persepolis, Ecbatana and Pasargadae undefended. These Achaemenid royal cities also housed the accumulated wealth of 230 years of Persian rule; riches beyond the imaginings of even the most avaricious Greek.³²⁴ Alexander stayed on the battlefield of Gaugamela for only a very brief period of time. He gathered his troops together, buried his dead, and then set off at a rapid pace for the wealthy cities of Babylon and Susa. It took him around three weeks to travel the 460km from the battlefield of Gaugamela to Babylon (21.9kmpd), which surrendered without issue after negotiations conducted with emissaries able to travel much faster than the bulk of the army.

As the army approached they were met by the Persian general and governor, Mazaeus, who himself had fought at Gaugamela against Alexander only a few weeks previously. He ceremoniously handed over the city and its many treasures to the Macedonians without a blow being struck.

The Macedonians remained in Babylon for around a month, during which time they gorged themselves on everything the legendary city of Babylon had to offer. Towards the end of November they set off east for Susa leaving Mazaeus the satrap of Babylon; the first time Alexander had given such a lofty position to a Persian.³²⁵

Susa had already surrendered to one of Alexander's officers sent there immediately after the victory at Gaugamela; Alexander's visit was more ceremonial than military. Alexander's army had suffered serious losses on almost constant campaigns, and with the need to leave behind troops to act as garrisons in various cities, and would have been becoming something of a concern. At around this time, however, Alexander was met by the last batch of Macedonian reinforcements we ever hear of, more than 15,000 from Macedonia, Thrace and the Peloponnese.



24. Alexander's journey from Gaugamela into the Persian heartland.

Alexander almost immediately began to spend the immense sums of money he had suddenly inherited. He gave out lavish bonuses to the men whilst in Babylon, and sent 3000 talents back to Macedonia to help Antipater with the war effort against the Spartan king Agis III who was in full revolt in Greece.³²⁶

Alexander left Susa during December of 331, leaving behind Darius' mother, daughters and son and headed towards the Zagros Mountains.³²⁷ He could have waited until spring of the following year when the Zagros Range would have been rather easier to cross, but he feared growing resistance and needed to act quickly. If Alexander expected trouble from the Uxii, he was not disappointed. We hear sketchy descriptions of at least two campaigns in the area, but they were not of the scale of most of Alexander's more famous campaigns and were downplayed by our sources. Diodorus tells us that the Uxii had decided to guard the passage that Alexander had chosen:³²⁸

Alexander found the passage guarded by Madates, a cousin of Darius, with a substantial force, and he saw at once the difficulty of the place. The sheer cliffs offered top passage, but an Uxian native who knew the country offered to lead the soldiers by a narrow hazardous path to a position above the enemy. Alexander accepted the proposal and sent off with him a body of troops, while he himself expedited the move as far as possible and attacked the defenders in waves.

This tactic would have greatly appealed to Alexander as it would have allowed him to attack the enemy from the front and above simultaneously, as we have seen his favoured battle tactic. Diodorus continues:

The assault was pressed vigorously and the Persians were preoccupied with the struggle when to their astonishment above their heads appeared the flying column of Macedonians. The Persians were frightened and took to their heels. Thus Alexander won the pass and soon after took all the cities in Uxiane.

Alexander added the conquered territory to the satrapy of Susiana and paused briefly to reorganize the army. Parmenio and most of the heavy troops were sent across the plains whilst Alexander kept with himself the light armed which he marched into the mountains which ran in an unbroken line into Persia. Alexander's campaign was one of devastation and set the scene for the next two years of campaigning in Bactria and Sogdiana. Curtius tells us he was "laying waste this whole area".³²⁹ After two days of burning and pillaging Alexander entered the satrapy of Persia, two further days he arrived at the pass called the Susian Gates.

The pass was well defended by Ariobarzanes and 25,000 infantry. The pass itself comprised of steep cliffs and was precipitous on all sides, Curtius goes on to say:

on top of which stood the Persians, out of weapon-range, deliberately inactive and giving the impression of being fear stricken, as they waited for the Macedonian force to enter the narrowest part of the defile.

This very clever device is not mentioned in Arrian, perhaps because it worked to lull Alexander into a false sense of security as he attacked rather recklessly from the front only. The Macedonians advanced towards the pass, but as soon as the defenders realized what was happening they began to rain missiles down upon the Macedonians, and rolled large boulders down the cliffs to add to the general hail from above. The vulgate tradition notes that Alexander was completely taken by surprise by artillery hidden in the surrounding terrain which added to the death toll amongst the Macedonians.³³⁰ Alexander was forced to call a humiliating retreat, leaving his dead and dying on the field of battle.

No doubt furious at the setback, Alexander looked for a way of turning the pass. Arrian has the information coming from captured Persian troops, no doubt after torture although this is speculation. The vulgate has the vital information being conveyed by a bilingual herdsman.³³¹ This is perhaps the more likely as Alexander did not engage the Persians in the pass and so would be unlikely to have taken prisoners, and Alexander had a history of using local guides whilst traversing new regions.

Either way, Alexander discovered a track that would enable him to deliver troops to the rear of the Persian position, an opportunity he could not refuse. The track was particularly narrow and generally unsuitable for an army to cross. Arrian tells us Alexander instructed:

Craterus to remain behind with his own and Meleager's battalion, a few archers, and about 500 mounted troops, and to attack the pass as soon as he was sure that the advance part were safely round to the further side and were actually approaching the Persian position.

The timing was to be achieved by Craterus listening for the sound of trumpets, and attacking as soon as they received that signal. At the third watch, and under cover of darkness, Alexander set off with his light troops and three days rations. The first part of the climb was very steep to the head of the Bolsoru Pass (2,250m). Curtius describes the march quite vividly:³³²

Even apart from the impossible crags and precipitous rocks that time and again made them lose their footing, their progress was further impeded by snow-drifts, into which they fell as if into pits and, when their comrades tried to lift them, instead of coming out themselves they would pull in their helpers

The troops with Alexander were evidently frightened of this difficult and dangerous terrain which they could not see clearly as they were not even able to carry torches for fear the Persians would see them and guess their purpose. Curtius also tells us that the Macedonians were fearful that their guide would escape stranding them on the mountain. "The king's safety and their own depended on the loyalty or the life of a single prisoner."

After much difficulty, and probably quite a bit of time, they reached the top of the Bolsoru Pass. From this point the path headed southwards over more broken ground along the edges of the Paskōhak Massif to the Persian camp. In all likelihood the action probably occurred over two consecutive nights, with Alexander showing considerable caution in avoiding the Persian scouting parties that were no doubt at work in the area. Arrian tells us that, despite the difficulties of the terrain, when Alexander was prepared to attack, he did so rapidly, overwhelming the first outpost before daybreak. He quickly moved to the second with much the same result, but failed to reach the third and final outpost before the defenders fled in panic. With the outposts captured or abandoned, Alexander was able to attack Ariobarzanes' position just after daybreak. Arrian presents this as a surprise attack, but surely the Persians must have received news from their outposts of what was occurring.³³³ Either way, Alexander was in a position to attack the fortification in the pass from two directions simultaneously.

As Alexander began his flanking attack, the Salpinx sounded and Craterus began his assault from the front. Arrian describes the situation:

The enemy were properly caught; making no attempt at resistance, they would have fled for their lives had it been possible, but the Macedonians were all round them, on one side Alexander pressing his attack, on the other Craterus and his men rapidly thrusting forward, so that most of them had no option but to turn back to the

inner defences in the hope of saving themselves there.

Unfortunately for the Persians, Ptolemy had already captured these inner defences and was waiting with 3,000 infantrymen. Many of the Persians were cut down in heavy fighting, but a few, including Ariobarzanes, managed to escape to the surrounding hills and mountains.

The similarities between the accounts of the fall of the Persian Gates and the battle of Thermopylae some 150 years previously are obvious.³³⁴ No doubt much was made of this incident by the propagandists, especially as Persepolis would shortly be in flames, as Athens had been soon after Thermopylae.

Alexander once again shows a genius for rapid and silent movements of large bodies of men in order to maintain the element of surprise. We also see Alexander, once again, using the two-pronged approach of attacking the enemy in multiple directions simultaneously. This has to be balanced, however, against Alexander's serious lack of judgement at the initial assault; to sacrifice men so needlessly when his usual flanking strategy was so readily available (once the pass had been identified) is puzzling. We can only assume that he felt the defenders would retreat immediately upon seeing his advance, as the Uxians had done.

After the Persians had been routed Alexander made all haste for Persepolis in May 330, probably before news reached him of the victory in Greece of Antipater over the Spartan-led revolt of Agis III. He arrived with such speed that the defenders did not have time to plunder the treasury, and Alexander took possession of it as well as the city and treasury of Pasargadae nearby.

After the destruction of Persepolis, Alexander learned that Darius was in Media, and he now made the Great King's capture his priority. Upon hearing of Alexander's approach, Darius send his baggage train to the Caspian Gates and he himself held onto Ecbatana, the modern city of Hamadan. Arrian tells us that on the way to Ecbatana Alexander invaded and subdued the territory of the Paraetacae. News again reached Alexander that Darius was preparing for battle and that the remnants of the Persian army from Gaugamela had been reinforced by troops from Scythia and Cadusia. Alexander left his baggage train to follow at their own pace and set off with the full army in battle array expecting another set-piece battle with Darius.³³⁵

Alexander rapidly reached Media where he learned that his earlier information had been incorrect and that Darius had not been reinforced and the Persian army was far too weak to risk another battle, and had decided to withdraw further. Alexander increased his rate of march, and likely left behind the infantry in order to catch Darius lest he escape again. After a march which Arrian describes brilliantly, Alexander caught up with the dead or dying Darius.

Upon finding Darius, Alexander gathered together the army that was now

strung out across a huge area of his newly conquered territory, and advanced into Hyrcania. He divided the army into three sections and took the largest and most mobile contingent himself against the Tapurians. Once Alexander had crossed the first range of hills he encountered, he divided his contingent again and moved forward with the hypaspists, archers and some unspecified Macedonian light infantry. The terrain was evidently difficult and Alexander continually made stops at key strategic points to leave behind detachments of troops to guard passes and important roads. Alexander was evidently very wary in this unknown land of an uprising that would cut him off from his supply lines. We do not hear of any serious campaigning in the region, but after crossing through a key mountain pass Alexander was met by Nabarzanes, commander of Darius' cavalry, Phrataphernes, Satrap of Hyrcania and Parthia, and a number of other high ranking Persians who surrendered to him. Alexander paused at his camp to allow the various detachments of the army to catch up with him before advancing further.

Alexander now marched towards Mardia, where Arrian tells us:³³⁶ the people of the province suffered severely; many were killed either attempting to escape or, in some cases, offering resistance, and many prisoners were taken.

This appears to be the first signs of the brutality that was to mar Alexander's campaigns in Bactria and Sogdiana. After this brief but brutal campaign Alexander went to Zadracarta and then onto the frontiers of Areia.

Alexander then received reports that Bessus was proclaiming himself Great King and successor to Darius, and had also changed his name to Artaxerxes. Bessus was in command of the Persian troops that had escaped into Bactria, along with some native Bactrians. Alexander, unsurprisingly, marched at once for the region of Bactria with the entire army.

Ancient Bactria, roughly modern Afghanistan, was very far removed, topographically, from the Greek world. The soaring mountains of the Hindu Kush and the Pamirs ranges, with peaks as high as 25,000ft, surrounded Bactria on three sides; the west to northwest is bordered by the deserts of Turkestan through which runs the Oxus River (modern Amu Darya) on its way to the Aral Sea.³³⁷ This was terrain entirely alien to Alexander: no longer would he be facing large armies in massive setpiece battles. From this time forward, at least until he reached India, he would be facing an entirely new form of warfare: that of guerrilla action. Alexander would now face small-scale ambushes and rapid strikes against his forces; he faced enemies who knew they could not defeat him in battle, and so he devised an alternative means of fighting using the very land of Bactria to its fullest advantage.

Whilst on the march to Bactra, modern Balkh, scouts reported that Satibarzanes, satrap of Aria, had murdered Anaxippus and a group of Macedonians and was making preparations to join up with Bessus to oppose

Alexander's advance. As was usually the case, Alexander divided the army in smaller, more mobile units capable of a more rapid response. He took with him the usual suspects (Companion Cavalry, the mounted javelin-men, the archers, Agrianians, and two *taxeis* of *pezhetairoi*; namely Amyntas and Coenus) and reached Artacoana, a march of some 120km, in only two days.³³⁸ The remaining troops were left under the command of Craterus. At this point the sources diverge: Arrian has Satibarzanes taken so completely by surprise that he fled almost immediately, with many of his troops deserting; he also has Alexander completing the recapture of Artacoana himself, and Craterus rejoining the army later on the road to Zarangia. The vulgate tradition has Alexander first laying siege to Artacoana, and then pursuing Satibarzanes once he fled, with Craterus being left to complete the capture of the city, an honour that he actually leaves for Alexander upon his return from the chase, and after a siege of some thirty days.³³⁹ Neither source provides us with enough data to determine which is the more accurate, but the core is much the same; a revolt that was quickly suppressed, a division of forces, a lightning march and the flight of Satibarzanes.

Satibarzanes evidently attempted a second revolt in Areia, after the Philotas affair: he entered the province with 2,000 cavalry given to him by Bessus and persuaded the natives to rise up once more. Alexander evidently did not feel this revolt significant; Craterus was dispatched with 600 cavalry and 6,000 Greek infantry to suppress it; it is unusual for Alexander to include so few Macedonians, perhaps none (the ethnicity of the 600 cavalry is unknown), in this kind of mission.³⁴⁰ Satibarzanes became cornered and fought fiercely, but he was killed in action and his men fled. His death ended the revolt in Areia; there was no longer a figurehead around which to gather. There were also evidently few men willing to revolt, as none actually seemed to join Satibarzanes; The revolt was, therefore, perhaps not as serious some later revolts would prove to be.

Alexander reformed the army, and after dealing with the Philotas affair, which resulted in the execution of both him and his father, Parmenio, he proceeded into the territory of the Ariasprians, who welcomed him and were treated accordingly. Alexander was almost ready to conduct the anticipated campaign against Bessus, but was delayed slightly on his way to Bactria by campaigns against the Drangae, the Gedrosians and the Arachosians of which we know no details other than that the snows were deep and the Macedonians suffered severely through lack of supplies and exhaustion.

Alexander's campaign in Bactria is far more complex than is generally supposed; it is frequently stated that this stage of the campaign represents a watershed in the style of combat that Alexander would face, and the army was reorganized to adapt to that change. There were no major cities to capture, and the population lived in small isolated villages, or were nomadic. The military capacity of the region was enormous; Curtius notes a potential

of 30,000 cavalry, although no significant infantry were available.³⁴¹



25. Alexander's campaign in Bactria and Sogdiana.

In the same way as he had with Darius, Alexander needed to settle matters with Bessus. In late March 329 he crossed the Parapamisadae region, centred on the Kabul Valley forming the crossroads between Bactria, India and Arachosia. Supplies were short and snow still blocked the mountain passes; Alexander was forced to wait until spring. He provisioned the army from the villages of Parapamisadae and founded a new Alexandria near Begram to guard the mountain passes of Shibar and Khawak, and protect against incursions from Bactria once the army had moved on.³⁴²

Bessus' defence of Bactria initially was the scorched-earth policy that the Persian nobility was so opposed to before the Granicus. There was little else Bessus could do, as he had failed to unite the Bactrian nobility under his banner, and he commanded only seven or eight thousand cavalry.³⁴³ With the scorched-earth policy under way, Bessus, and those few who were loyal, moved north of the Oxus River. Alexander occupied the central Bactrian region without bloodshed, and after appointing Artabazus as satrap he pursued Bessus across the 75km of parched desert that led to the Oxus. The desert crossing was extremely difficult and many died, especially with the uncontrolled drinking by the parched soldiers from the Oxus River once it was reached.

In a rare propaganda coup that his father would have been proud of, Alexander announced that his quarrel was with Bessus alone, and that any deserters would be rewarded.³⁴⁴ Dataphernes, Catanes and Spitamenes decided to make peace with the conqueror and arrested Bessus, presenting him to Alexander soon after, thus ending the short-lived revolt. Alexander here showed himself a keen strategist: he realized that the region would be

all but impossible to conquer by force of arms, as so many armies have come to realize over the centuries. Here, Alexander takes his lead from his father and overcomes an extremely dangerous situation without the need for bloodshed.

Initially Bactria did not resist Alexander's passing. There appears to have been no stomach for resistance, and little support for Bessus' grab for power; this can be demonstrated in the lack of troops that he had available to him as noted above. As Alexander marched through Bactria, one by one prominent nobles and warlords made their peace with him. These nobles, including Dataphernes, Catanes and Spitamenes, were rewarded and allowed to return to their kingdoms or satrapies. The Bactrian cavalry that had briefly served Bessus had returned to their native towns and villages without further resistance.³⁴⁵

The only sign of the passing of a great army was the very few old and infirm that had been left behind as garrisons, particularly at Bactra, the capital of Bactria. Only one native had died during the campaign, Bessus himself. For the Bactrians, once Alexander had passed through, their lives would return to normal; there was simply a new king on the throne. This goodwill would very soon evaporate and Alexander would be forced to fight a long and bloody campaign to suppress the region, exactly what his diplomatic skills in capturing Bessus had been designed to avoid, and we must ask why.

Alexander had passed peacefully through Bactria and Sogdiana to reach the Jaxartes River without incident; indeed we know that Alexander received a supply of horses from the natives as he passed through Maracanda. Seemingly out of nowhere, at the Jaxartes, a band of Macedonian foragers was massacred by a native force.³⁴⁶ Alexander's entirely predictable massive counter-offensive only succeeded in intensifying the resistance. Macedonian garrisons all along the Jaxartes were slaughtered and resistance spread throughout Sogdiana.³⁴⁷ Almost in an instant, Sogdiana was in flames and Alexander was embroiled in two years of fierce and relentless fighting, perhaps the hardest and most prolonged of his career.

As with Cyrus before him, we must ask why Alexander only met with such massive resistance once he reached the frontier zone of Sogdiana and Scythia. Arrian is usually thought to supply the answer: either the locals were becoming increasingly fearful of Alexander, or it was because the nobles feared the general summons of all the local leaders to a meeting in Bactra. Arrian cannot be correct, however; there is no reason why the natives should suddenly become fearful of Alexander, and Arrian makes it clear that the summons only occurred after the revolt had begun: it seems Alexander was intending to ask the Bactrian nobles like Spitamenes to help crush the revolt, a revolt they ultimately joined.³⁴⁸ If we reject Arrian's assertions regarding the origins of the war, we have Alexander only performing one

major undertaking whilst in Sogdiana, the foundation of Alexandria-Eschate: but why would this simple act, one repeated by Alexander throughout the Empire, provoke such a reaction?

It seems clear that it was almost immediately after the site for the new Alexandria had been chosen, and planning begun, that the immediate area rose up in revolt.³⁴⁹ It was only against fierce opposition that Alexander's engineers were able to build the walls up to a defensible height. Alexander responded with a lightning campaign, re-capturing all seven of the towns that had revolted in only two days. The inhabitants, being held responsible for the revolt, were either killed or enslaved.

The Sogdian revolt, I believe, was a direct result of the foundation of Alexandria-Eschate; the reaction of the natives, local nobility such as Spitamenes, and the Scythians who had recently joined the fight, can only be explained by what the city represented to the region.³⁵⁰ This new city was the first to have been built by Alexander in Bactria or Sogdiana. Previously to this only a few old and disabled Greeks or Macedonians were settled in the region, and it appeared to the locals that the new king would soon leave the area to return to how things had been under the Great Kings. The creation of a large fortress-like foundation with a seemingly entirely military objective was a clear statement to the local population that their existing way of life was under threat. Cyrus' city foundation had provoked a similar response from the native population.

Alexander's clear intent was to militarize the Jaxartes region, and prevent the Scythians from crossing that river. Scythians had a long history of interaction, both military cooperation and trade, with the peoples of the Persian Empire, and it was Alexander's stated intention to break these bonds. Ultimately Alexander wished to prevent a military alliance between Sogdians, Bactrians and Scythians against his rule at some point in the future; instead he instantly created just that. Alexander responded to the revolt with systematic destruction, but this only succeeded in exacerbating the problem as the natives could see more plainly that their way of life was being destroyed.

328

At the beginning of 328 Alexander marched east from Bactra against the remaining rebels along the Oxus River, crossing into Sogdiana after marching through Bactria.³⁵¹ As was becoming usual practice, Alexander also divided the army, this time into five mobile columns in order to cover the greatest possible amount of terrain simultaneously: these were commanded by Ptolemy, Hephaestion, Perdiccas, and by Coenus and Artabazus jointly; the final column was led by the king himself. Arrian does not give details, but does tell us that the first four columns reduced many

fortified positions in Sogdiana. This appears to have been a devastating campaign; Alexander used a scorched-earth policy of his own across the whole of the Zeravshan valley.³⁵² This strategy demonstrates Alexander's belief that the new circumstances required a new approach.

The lack of security in the whole of the Bactria/Sogdiana region is clearly demonstrated by an ambush of Spitamenes. He drove a herd of cattle into a plain and waited in a wooded area to ambush the Greeks that he expected to pass by. The ploy worked brilliantly and the Greeks, led by Attines, were slaughtered to a man; Spitamenes withdrew after a successful counter-attack by a small leaderless group of Companion Cavalry and Greek mercenaries (evidently the sick and infirm that Alexander had left behind), who were in turn defeated by a detachment of Scythians as they travelled back to Zariaspa.

Alexander's strategy of militarizing the Sogdian frontier continued with the construction of a series of garrison settlements in modern Tadjikistan. Alexander continued moving east towards the Hissar Range that separated east and west Sogdiana occupying strongholds as he went. The most significant was the Sogdian Rock, or the Rock of Ariamazes, which probably was attacked in the summer of 328.³⁵³

In late summer, Alexander drew together all of the various flying columns that he had deployed throughout Sogdiana, converging on Maracanda. Alexander accepted the surrender, or at least the offers of allegiance, from the Saca tribes. It appears that they were suitably impressed with Alexander's campaign of 328 to think it prudent to come to terms.³⁵⁴ Even whilst in the midst of the most bloody campaign of his career, Alexander was evidently planning ahead; he declined an invitation from the Chorasmian king to campaign towards the Black Sea, stating that his sights were firmly on India as his next objective.

An excellent illustration of a possible deficiency in Alexander's army is given by the slaughter of Pharnuches' men at the hands of Spitamenes and his 600 Scythian mounted archers. They evidently engaged the Greek infantry, but not by a direct frontal assault, but by riding around them at a distance firing arrows at the Greeks. Being only infantry, the Greeks had no capability to respond, and were slaughtered. Usually this would not have been a usable tactic if the Greek force had possessed cavalry, and this is an excellent illustration of the need for mounted troops to protect infantry in ancient warfare. This defeat was so potentially devastating for morale that the few survivors that made it back to the main army were told, under penalty of death, to remain silent on the disaster.

Resistance crumbled in late 328. Spitamenes did launch a daring raid upon Maracanda soon after the successful slaughter of Pharnuches' men, but was quickly driven off into the desert by a column commanded by Alexander himself; the pursuit had to be broken off as the desert was reached, for lack

of supplies. Spitamenes' rebellion was ultimately defeated after a loss to a column commanded by Coenus; he managed to withdraw but was betrayed by his Massagetic allies who made peace with Alexander. His former allies arrested and beheaded him, while the other rebel commander, Dataphernes, was handed over to Alexander in chains.³⁵⁵

After a lengthy delay in Maracanda, which included the murder of Cleitus, autumn was suddenly upon the Macedonians.³⁵⁶ One final campaign was to be conducted before the onset of winter, however. From Maracanda, Alexander moved south to eliminate a group of Bactrian rebels who were based in the city of Xenippa, the location of which is unknown. No details are known about the campaign, other than its successful nature. After this, Alexander moved to what would become his winter quarters in Nautaca, probably located between Maracanda and the Oxus River. Nautaca was the last refuge of the rebels commanded by Sisimithres: these Alexander forced into submission too as the last military action of 328. Sisimithres was situated in another seemingly impregnable citadel, which was again well supplied with food and water in order to withstand a lengthy siege. Access to the fortress was blocked by a deep ravine that contained a torrent of water that came from the plateau above. Arrian has the ravine encircle the rock, but this cannot be so. It was essentially a river; Arrian's seems to be a stock description, or else he is confusing two sources. As usual Alexander did not allow nature to stand against him and, taking his cue from the siege of Tyre, he set about building a causeway across the chasm and the fortress fell into his hands

This represented the end of the rebellion in Bactria and Sogdiana, But not the end of the fighting. This would drag on into 327. Most of the local nobility had come to terms with Alexander, willingly or otherwise, and the native population had been terrorized into subjugation. Amyntas was left as satrap of the region with a massive force of 10,000 infantry and 3,500 cavalry, an army to rival that left in Macedonian with Antipater.

327

Whilst in winter quarters in Nautaca, Alexander undertook what was to become a significant new military policy. Alexander was evidently concerned by these provinces, and their potential for causing further trouble, but he was so impressed by the quality of the troops that they had supplied to both Darius and the rebellion that he began a recruiting programme. 30,000 youths were conscripted into the army and their training began in order to turn them into Macedonian-style heavy infantry: they were to be trained in Macedonian tactics and weapons. Significant numbers of native cavalry were also enlisted.³⁵⁷ This recruitment drive had the dual effect of strengthening the Macedonian field army for the coming Indian campaign, whilst also

removing significant numbers of troops, potentially rebellious troops, from Sogdiana and Bactria. This is a policy that had a precedent in Alexander's career, namely his actions in the Balkans, where thousands of Thracians, Odrysians, Triballians etc. were conscripted for exactly the same reasons.

Early in the spring of 327, expecting the major campaigning in Sogdiana to be over, Alexander marched out after a two-month winter break. Impatience, lack of intelligence, or freak weather served to make this an extremely bad decision, however.³⁵⁸ The army suffered badly from a series of lightning storms that were accompanied by a drop in temperature and a snowstorm. Disaster was only averted when a supply caravan arrived from the former enemy, Sisimithres. After some minor operations, the army marched south to Bactra. Here, Craterus was left with three *taxeis* of *pezhetairoi* to deal with the remaining insurgents, few though they were. After a further delay in Bactra to make preparations, the army marched towards India.

Chapter Eight

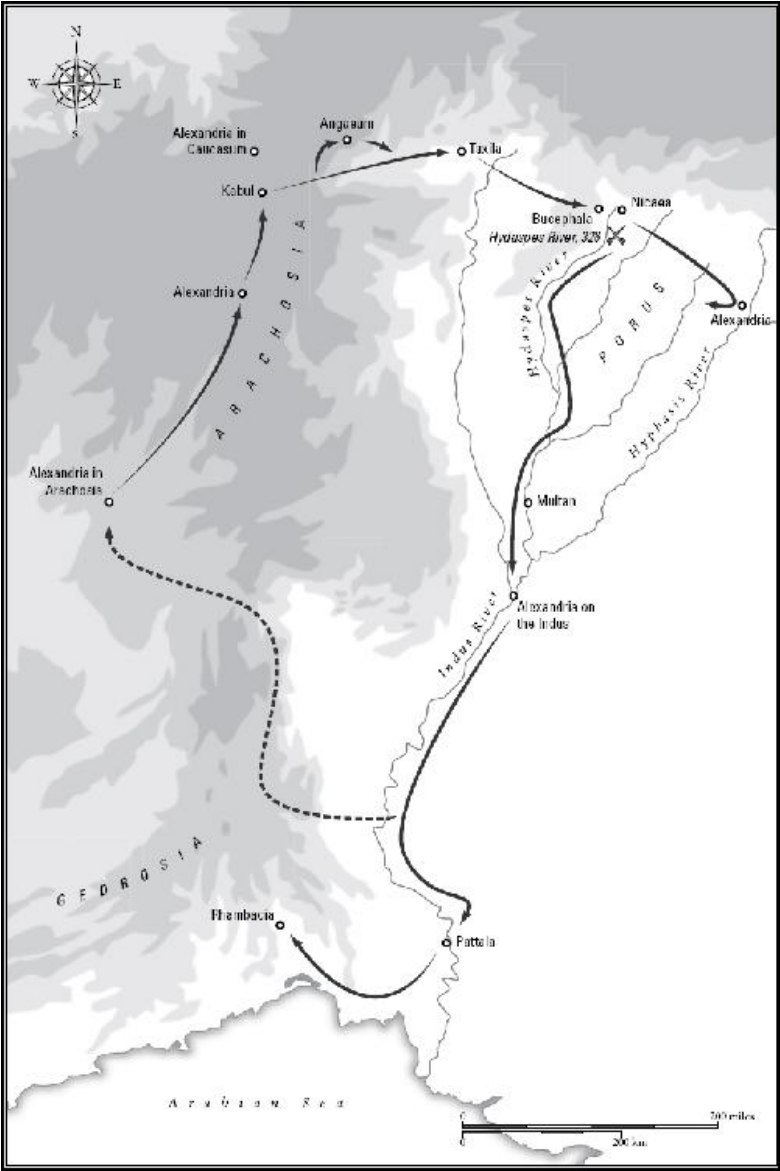
India, 327–5

By the spring of 327 Alexander had quashed the rebellion in Sogdiana and Bactria and was ready to march on India. It is evident that Alexander had been contemplating this expedition for some time, at least since summer the previous year, and almost certainly long before that. The army that marched with Alexander was around 50,000 strong, hardly more than had fought at Gaugamela. The size of the Macedonian contingent was reduced, however; there had been no documented reinforcements from Macedonia for almost four years. There had been a large influx from Greece, but they were left behind to ensure that there were no further difficulties in Sogdiana and Bactria.³⁵⁹ The organization of the army had also changed to make it more mobile and able to respond to changing circumstances: the *pezhetairoi* had all but abandoned the sarissa; its use is not recorded again in the sources. The *prodromoi* had been merged with the Companion Cavalry, probably a sign of seriously reduced numbers; Orientals also started to be introduced into the ranks of the Companions. A new officer class had also emerged in Sogdiana, partly by design and partly enforced due to the removal of men like Parmenio, Philotas and Cleitus. The new officer cadre consisted of Alexander's childhood friends, men he believed he could trust intimately: the likes of Hephaestion, Ptolemy and Perdiccas.

Alexander's justifications for the invasion of India are not difficult to find; although he demonstrably never needed a justification or an excuse.³⁶⁰ He had already received representations from Indian rulers who wished to use Alexander as a means of expanding their own territory, or of crushing their enemies; Diodorus and Curtius both have representations arriving from the ruler of Taxila who approached Alexander while he was still in Sogdiana.³⁶¹ Alexander's army had also picked up a number of Indian refugees like Sisicottus, such men had every reason to encourage Alexander to invade, although ultimately no encouragement was needed.

Alexander's main justification would not have been manipulation by Indian rebels, or representations from anyone; it is most likely that Alexander wished to complete the conquest of the Achaemenid Empire. It is a much debated question how much control the Persians actually exercised over India: Gandhara and the lands of the Indus had been nominally under Persian control since the reign of Darius I. It was Herodotus that tells us that Darius I extended the Persian Empire as far as the Indus, but the Persian

presence by 327 was minimal at best, perhaps illustrated by the lack of Indian involvement at the Battle of Gaugamela: Persian rule probably extended no further than the Kabul Valley which bordered the satrapies of Bajaur and Swat to the south.³⁶²



26. Alexander's campaign India.

Ten days march south from Bactra took the army back across the Hindu Kush Mountains and into Parapamisadae; from there they advanced down the Cophen River Valley (Kabul River Valley) towards the plains of the Indus and the satrapy of Bajaur. After crossing the Hindu Kush, the invasion

force was divided into two columns as had become the general policy. The first column was commanded by Hephaestion and Perdiccas, and consisted of three *taxeis* of heavy infantry (those of Gorgias, Cleitus the White and Meleager), half the Companion Cavalry and all of the mercenary cavalry, a total of around 6–7,000 men.³⁶³ This column was instructed to secure the main road to India, no simple task. The remainder of the army, commanded by Alexander, marched into the mountainous terrain north of the Kabul River into the regions of Bajaur and Swat, continuing the brutal campaign from Sogdiana. At first glance this campaign looks punitive, but it was vital in order to protect his lines of supply and communication down the Kabul River Valley. Alexander, in his guise as the newly appointed Great King, saw these natives as his subjects and any resistance to his rule was met with bloody repression. The campaign was started by the occupants of a local town, anonymous in all of the sources, who had retired to a mountain stronghold and made ready to resist Alexander. In the initial assault, Alexander was slightly wounded by an arrow to the shoulder; this, coupled with Alexander's desire to make an example of them, led directly to a massacre of the defenders.³⁶⁴ There is little doubt that this act was a deliberate policy to terrify the native population into submission; Curtius tells us that even before the city fell, Alexander had instructed the troops to take no prisoners. The sack had an immediate impact in that the neighbouring city of Andaca surrendered without incident.

Alexander's column was further divided; Craterus was left to continue suppressing the native populations while Alexander moved on into the Kunar Valley to the east. By this time Alexander's reputation for brutality was preceding him; in every town he encountered the inhabitants fled into the mountains before he arrived, and frequently burned their homes. As a furtherance of his policy of militarizing the region, Alexander founded another city in a strategically important location; this is a direct copy of the policy conducted in Sogdiana that had both caused the revolt, and helped to suppress it.³⁶⁵

After almost two years of mountain campaigns against enemies conducting guerrilla warfare, Alexander had become adept in dealing with these tactics. The Aspasiens of the Bajaur region offered little more than an inconvenience to the Macedonians; the Assaceni of Swat were a different matter, however. The king of the Assaceni in the Lower Swat Valley, named Assacanus, commanded a substantial force of some 30,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry, which was further strengthened by mercenaries, perhaps 7,000 strong. Despite this large force, it was not sufficient to meet Alexander in open battle, and Assacanus was astute enough to realize this, retiring to a number of local strongholds, the most important of which was Massaga located in the region of the Katgala Pass.³⁶⁶

Massaga was another formidable natural defensive position, bordered by a fast flowing river with sheer banks to the west preventing any approach, and

by steep cliffs to the south. Curtius describes the fortress location as:³⁶⁷

A barricade of beetling crags, at the foot of which lie caves and chasms hollowed to a great depth over a long period of time. Where these terminate a ditch of massive proportions forms a barrier.

The city itself was protected by massive walls over seven kilometres long, their lower sections made of stone, the upper of unbaked brick bounded by pebbles. These mud brick walls were further reinforced by a wooden superstructure, none of which delayed Alexander for long.³⁶⁸

Despite initially retiring to the defences of the city, Assacanus marched out with his mercenary infantry to engage the Macedonians. Arrian implies that finances were short for Assacanus and the need to pay the Indian mercenaries for the duration of their service was a factor in the decision.³⁶⁹ Another factor was probably Alexander's relatively small advance force: Assacanus probably felt, depending on his level of reconnaissance information, that he could destroy this and the war was over; or possibly that if he destroyed half of the army now, the rest would be easily picked off whenever it finally arrived. Ever the great recycler of successful strategies, Alexander saw the mercenaries advance from the fortification and realized that the battle was to be fought close to the city, so that the Indians could easily retire to the city when they were defeated, surviving to fight another day. Alexander, therefore, withdrew to some nearby high ground in order to draw the enemy towards him and increase the distance they would have to retreat after the engagement. This is a classic tactic of Alexander: we see on countless occasions the Macedonian king making some kind of pre-emptive movement to draw the enemy onto terrain of his choosing, rather than fighting on the enemy's terms. Seeing the Macedonians seemingly in retreat, the Indians advanced into the trap. At the appropriate moment, the advance force of Macedonians turned around to face the enemy and engage them. The Indians were apparently charging up the hill in considerable disorder; they were quite simply no match for the disciplined ranks of the Macedonian heavy infantry. Arrian tells us that this display of discipline left the Indians badly shaken, the following engagement was brief and the Indians fled almost immediately; 200 of them left dead on the battlefield.

As Alexander surveyed the fortifications after the skirmish he was wounded in the leg by an arrow. The wound must have been relatively minor, however, as it did not stop Alexander taking an active role in the siege preparations or in the assault which quickly led to the fall of the city.

After the fall of Massaga, the army was again divided into a number of flying columns; Coenus was sent to Bazira whilst Attalus, Alcetas and Demetrius advanced upon Ora which was being blockaded at the same time as Bazira. Alexander first captured Ora, and upon hearing this news, the citizens of Bazira abandoned their town in the middle of the night and made for the defensive position called the Rock of Aornus.

The fortress was not only well situated and well defended, but it was provisioned enough to withstand a two-year siege. Alexander's success was hard fought and described in the companion volume to this work.

After the fall of Aornus, Alexander marched to Ecbolima where he received a report that the brother of Oxyartes, Erices, had blockaded a narrow pass on the road towards India with a force of some 20,000 men and 15 elephants.³⁷⁰ Curtius tells us that advancing quickly, with apparently only the slingers and archers, he dislodged the defenders from the pass and scattered them. This is an example of Curtius' exaggeration, or simply a mistake. Alexander commanded no more than 2,000 archers and slingers; and it seems unlikely, to say the least, that these missile troops, with no back up of infantry or cavalry, could have carried a pass commanded by a force ten times its size. After crossing the Indus River, Alexander entered Taxila. Almost immediately he was met by king Taxiles who brought Alexander some much-needed supplies. Alexander's next stop was the Hydaspes River.

Hydaspes River

In many ways the battle of the Hydaspes is the most interesting of all of Alexander's set-piece battles, although certainly not the most famous. Alexander was faced with an entirely new weapon of war, the elephant, and his ability to adapt and overcome this new tactical problem demonstrates his genius just as well as the manoeuvres that ensured victory.³⁷¹ Despite being a fascinating battle, it is probably the most difficult to reconstruct given the problems of the surviving sources: these must be examined first before Alexander's tactics can be established with any certainty.

Sources

Almost all modern historians rightly accept Arrian's account of the Hydaspes as the fullest, most reliable and most tactically coherent, but that is not to say the sources are without tactical flaws, however.³⁷² Arrian suffers, as always, from the usual problem of the inadequacy of information in *his* sources. He cites only two of his sources by name: Aristobulus and Ptolemy; the others are cited collectively, and then only once.³⁷³ It is likely that most of Arrian's narrative is derived from Ptolemy, largely because he appears to have an important role in the battle and he was always wont to emphasize his own achievements, especially if it was at the expense of his later rivals. Despite being in the boat alongside Alexander as he crossed the Hydaspes River, Ptolemy does not present a good overall tactically coherent narrative, but he does include the orders to sub-commanders when they occur.³⁷⁴ If it is the case that Ptolemy did not have an overall picture of the tactics for the battle

before it occurred, then Alexander could not have held a council of war, like that which occurred before Gaugamela, as Ptolemy would surely have been invited by 326. Ptolemy's coherence would also have suffered from Alexander's necessity of changing the tactics of the battle continually, to adjust to weather, terrain and indeed to Porus' elephants. The overall strategy would have been well thought out before, but flexible in its execution. Holding a council of war at Gaugamela, and not at the Hydaspes River, is probably a sign of Alexander's increasingly insular nature closer to the end of his life. It does not display a lack of trust in his sub-commanders, however, as he relied heavily upon them performing their duties with alacrity in order to gain victory here as elsewhere.

Curtius' account is replete with rhetoric and anecdotal material, as is frequently the case. Curtius does, however, present us with valuable topographical information: such as the width of the Hydaspes River, the islands in the river, the island upon which Alexander mistakenly landed, the slippery ground, and the plain where the final battle occurred.³⁷⁵ Curtius' manpower figures are slightly higher than our other sources, but not excessively so, and his number of elephants is actually the least at eighty-five, whilst he has 30,000 infantry and 300 six-man chariots. Curtius tends to pay little attention to tactical movements, and more to individual *aristeiai*, and is therefore of lesser use in a tactical study.³⁷⁶

Plutarch's account is based almost entirely on 'Alexander's letters'; although other sources are cited: these include Onesicritus and Sotion, as well as "most writers" when he clearly does not wish to divulge his source specifically.³⁷⁷ The authenticity of the letter has been much debated; the most we can say is that the letter is probably not genuine, but that it is certainly based upon good primary sources; it is consistent with the picture we have in Arrian from Ptolemy and Aristobulus. In general terms, Plutarch does not often use tactical terminology, nor is he terribly interested in strategy and tactics; the Hydaspes is no exception. With this drawback, he is of little use to us here.

Diodorus is similar to the rest of the vulgate tradition in that his narrative is rhetorical in nature and contains, in this case, little of tactical interest. As in Plutarch, terminology, when used, is vague and lacking in full detail; for example, Porus divided his cavalry by posting a body on each flank and that he divided his elephants equally along the length of the front line. The motif of the castle wall is repeated throughout the vulgate tradition, with the elephants representing towers with the infantry acting as the curtain wall between them. Diodorus' descriptions of Alexander's dispositions are even less tactically useful: "he viewed those of the enemy and arranged his own forces accordingly".³⁷⁸ Diodorus also fails to recognize that there were several phases of the battle involving some intricate manoeuvres from Alexander.

Topography

Frontinus tells us that Alexander made his night crossing of the Hydaspes upstream of his main camp, which was opposite Porus. Arrian tells us that the crossing point was 150 stades from the camp, around 29 km, where there was a headland projecting into the river from the western bank.³⁷⁹ This headland was extensively wooded, as was the island in the centre of the river; these factors together led Alexander to determine that, given the amount of cover, this was an ideal crossing point. The descriptions of the headland are supported by Curtius who noted the vital information that there was a large depression (*Fossa praealta*) on the west bank, again aiding in the concealment of a significant body of men. Where our sources diverge, however, is in the descriptions of the island that Alexander first landed on. Arrian calls it a large island, probably following Ptolemy; Aristobulus and the author of 'Alexander's letters' present it as being a rather small island.³⁸⁰ We must note, of course, that there appear to have been two islands in the Hydaspes River at the crossing point. The first was evidently larger, and closer to the western shore, than the second; which was in turn obscured from view by the first. It may be possible that each source had part of the truth; Ptolemy could simply be describing the first, larger, island, with Aristobulus paying more attention to the second.

If this is correct, then Arrian simply failed to realize that there were two islands, and there was not a disagreement among his sources regarding the size of a single island.

There is also disagreement as to whether Alexander realized that he was landing on an island, or mistakenly landed on it during the crossing, thinking he was landing on the far bank. Plutarch and Curtius lead us to believe that he did know it was an island and that the landing, therefore, was intentional. Arrian is a little more candid about the incident, claiming, from Ptolemy, that the landing on the island was indeed a mistake.³⁸¹ Despite the mistake, there was a ford beyond the island to the mainland which could be crossed waist deep by the men; the total width of the Hydaspes was four stades (768m), most of which was to the west of the island.

According to Pliny, the distance from Taxila to the Hydaspes River was 120 Roman miles (c.177km). Strabo adds that Alexander's march to the river was mostly in a southerly direction.³⁸² This information can be used to locate the battlefield close to Malakwal on the Jhelum River, roughly opposite the modern city of Haranpur. Alexander likely camped at Haranpur and from there marched upstream to Jalalpur, a distance of some 28km.³⁸³ At Jalalpur there was a well defined headland as described in the sources, now known as the Mangal Dev, which itself rises over 335m. To the east of Jalalpur is the Kandar Kas nullah (nullah being the Hindi word for a stream or watercourse), which flows into the Halkiwani nullah, the northern branch

of the Jhelum River. This nullah then skirts around the island of Adana, the largest in that section of the river, and one which Stein identified with the large island of Ptolemy. This detailed description of the river is that presented in the sources. The likelihood that the river has changed course means it is difficult to identify modern features and accurately site the battle.

Prelude to the Battle

Diodorus tells us that Alexander was 400 stades (around 77km) from Porus when he learned of the latter's location; almost immediately upon hearing that the Indian king was positioned along the banks of the Hydaspes, Alexander hastened to the river to force a decisive engagement.³⁸⁴ Upon arriving at the Hydaspes, Alexander was, at first glance, faced with a similar problem to that he encountered at both the Granicus and Issus: an opponent established in a strong defensive formation along the banks of a river. The most significant difference being the river itself: the Granicus was relatively shallow and fordable, as was the river at Issus, although both had steep banks in places. The Hydaspes was deep and fast-flowing as well as being in spate with the beginning of the monsoon rains. The size and situation of the Hydaspes, coupled with Porus' defence on the far bank, presented Alexander with one of the most difficult positions of his career. He was further disadvantaged by his complete lack of knowledge of the terrain or of the upcoming monsoon season.

Alexander must have been employing native guides, as was usual, who provided him with information about the terrain that he was marching into. This can be demonstrated by Arrian's statement that he had his fleet on the Indus dismantled, "the smaller vessels cut in half, the thirty-oared galleys into three", and transported by cart to the Hydaspes and re-assembled.³⁸⁵ He must, therefore, have had a certain amount of advance warning about the topography of the area, but his knowledge could not have matched that of the native king.

Porus' strategy was to prevent a crossing of the river by the Macedonians; something rather different from what Alexander had encountered at the Granicus or Issus. There the Persians intended to use the river to their advantage in battle by forcing the Macedonians to cross it and thus fight at a disadvantage: they in the river, the Persians on the banks. At the Hydaspes, however, that was not possible. If Porus was to defeat Alexander and remove the threat from his kingdom, why attempt this attrition strategy? A commander more confident in his troops might have withdrawn a little way from the river, enticed some of the enemy across and then attacked whilst they were in confusion and before they could get the whole army across. The strategy of Porus betrays a lack of confidence in his ability to defeat Alexander in open battle; whilst barring a crossing, the best Porus could

hope for was that the Macedonians would run into difficulties of supply and turn their attention elsewhere. This would essentially be victory by the absence of defeat, very similar to Pericles' strategy at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War, the refusal to fight the Spartan on their terms. This appears to have been Porus' main intention, but coupled with this strategy was Porus' need to delay the Macedonians and await the anticipated arrival of Abisares, king of Kashmir, who had apparently offered assistance. We cannot know how Porus' strategy would have changed once the two armies had merged, but I doubt he would have made an offensive move, as he would be in the same position as Alexander was, unable to cross unopposed. Porus would simply have been in a far better position to defend all vulnerable parts of the eastern banks of the river.

Alexander, of course, needed to enable a crossing of the river in order to force a decisive battle with the Indian monarch. The river was too wide and fast-flowing simply to use the fleet or any of the rafts that were also constructed; too few of the Macedonians would be able to get across if they were opposed. Alexander, therefore, needed a stratagem that would allow him to safely cross the river unopposed; to achieve this, he used a quite brilliant misdirection tactic.

Alexander quickly determined that he needed a crossing point that was unopposed; after conducting a thorough reconnaissance of the river banks both upstream and downstream, Alexander found what appeared to be a perfect crossing point some 30km upstream from his base camp near a 90 degree bend in the river, close to the island of Adana.³⁸⁶ The bend in the river, coupled with the dense woodland on the banks and islands, would act as excellent cover for his troops as well as the ships that would transport them across. Alexander knew that Porus was watching his operations keenly, and was matching his movements to prevent an unopposed crossing, so Alexander ordered large detachments of the army to march both upstream and downstream, mostly at night, making as much noise as they could to be sure the Indians would shadow them in case they were intending to cross. This tactic appears to have occurred over only a few nights in the sources, but in order for Porus to become lulled into a false sense of security by the numerous movements, it must have taken place over perhaps a week or more. These continuous movements led Porus to alter his defensive strategy somewhat; instead of continuing to shadow every move of the Macedonians, he posted a screen of lookouts along the river at potential crossing points whilst maintaining some reduced facility to follow Alexander's scouts.³⁸⁷

Alexander's strategy had effectively worked; Porus was no longer shadowing *every* movement. Alexander began preparations for the crossing with some key dispositions. Macedonian pickets were stationed along the banks of the river at evenly spaced distances, so that each could see those stationed both upstream and downstream of themselves. These pickets would have been crucial for communication with the complex movements that were

to follow. To continue the misdirection tactic, the pickets were ordered to keep their watch fires lit at night, and to make enough noise that the Indians could hear them; this again, apparently, lasted for several days.

Alexander also needed a way to force Porus to keep most of his army in camp while he was effecting the crossing; he did this simply by leaving Craterus and a relatively small force in the base camp to act as a pinning force. This consisted of his own hipparchy of Companion Cavalry, the Arachosian and Parapanisadian cavalry, two *taxeis* of *asthetairoi*/*pezhetairoi* (Alcetas' (formerly Perdiccas') *taxis* and Polyperchon's) and the 5,000 Indian infantry of Taxiles.

Type	Number	Total
His own Hipparchy	500	
Arachosian Cavalry	2,500	
Parapanisadae Cavalry		3,000 Cavalry
Two <i>Pezhetairoi Taxeis</i>	3,000	
Indian Troops	5,000	8,000 Infantry

Craterus was instructed to force a crossing once the main battle was joined. He would, therefore, also be required to perform a flanking attack upon the Indians, assuming he was able to ferry enough troops across the Hydaspes in time.

Craterus was given very detailed and specific instructions that have survived in Arrian, although in reality, Craterus was held at bay until the Indians were in flight and the battle was over. Craterus' instructions, according to Arrian, were:³⁸⁸

Craterus was ordered not to cross until Porus and his forces had set off against them (the troops commanded by Alexander), or until he learned that Porus was in flight and he himself (Alexander) was victorious. If, however, Porus should take part of his army and lead it against me (Alexander), while leaving another part, together with the elephants, back at his camp, you (Craterus) are to stay where you are. If, on the other hand, Porus leads all his elephants against me, though leaving behind a part of the army at the camp, you are to cross promptly. For it is only the elephants, he said, which are dangerous to disembarking horses, the rest of the army being no problem.

The flanking force was arranged in two separate divisions. The first, commanded by Alexander, was to travel the furthest upstream and also be first across the river. This force was relatively small by necessity, but certainly contained some of the elite troops of the army: the *agema* of the Companion Cavalry, four hipparchies of Companions (those of Hephaestion, Perdiccas, Coenus and Demetrius), the Bactrian, Sogdian and Scythian cavalry, a detachment of Dahae horse-archers, the hypaspists and two *taxeis*

of *pezhetairoi*/*asthetairoi* and, of course, the Agrianians, archers and javelin-men.³⁸⁹ Arrian gives the total of 5,000 cavalry and 6,000 infantry, but the real total should be a little higher:

Type	Number	Total
Agema	300	
Four Hipparchies	2,000	
Bactrian Cavalry		
Sogdian Cavalry	2,000	
Scythian Cavalry		
Dahae Horse-archers	1,000	5,300 Cavalry
Two <i>Pezhetairoi Taxeis</i>	3,000	
Hypaspists	3,000	
Agrianians	1,000	
Archers	1,000	
Javelin-men	1,000	9,000 Infantry

The secondary turning force was also sent upstream, but not as far as Alexander; this force consisted of two *taxeis* of *pezhetairoi*, supported by the mercenary cavalry and infantry. The strength of this detachment is never given, but it would have consisted of 3,000 Macedonian *pezhetairoi* and a total figure of 500 cavalry and 5,000 infantry is reasonable enough.³⁹⁰

Type	Number	Total
Greek Mercenary Cavalry	500	500 Cavalry
Three <i>Pezhetairoi Taxeis</i> (Meleager, Attalus and Gorgias)	4,500	
Greek Mercenary Infantry	Unknown	5,000? Infantry

These figures present us with a significant problem: the total is simply too small. This would give the army a total strength of only around 22,000 infantry and 8,800 cavalry, inconceivable at this stage of the campaign, especially after recent reinforcements of Bactrians, Scythians etc. into the army. The discrepancy seems to be in allied and mercenary troops; the Macedonians do all seem to be accounted for. We have no positive information as to the location of the missing troops, but I believe that we can posit two solutions: firstly, some troops were probably still campaigning in the region between Taxila and the Hydaspes. Alexander had marched through this area rapidly upon hearing news of Porus' location, and the region was probably not fully subjugated. The second is a tactical consideration: Alexander's tactic at the Hydaspes was deception, and Porus was no fool. In order to properly "sell" the deception, Alexander would have had to employ rather more than two forces (his and Meleager's). One can imagine other detachments of minor troops, mercenaries etc. could have been sent both upstream and downstream with no intention of crossing,

simply to confuse the Indians and hopefully divide their forces further by having to shadow these non front-line-troops. This would be similar to the use of such troops in all of the other set-piece battles; they were assigned important tasks that did not involve actual fighting, but were critical to victory; i.e. to act as a second line etc.

The Crossing

Along with all of the misdirection and deception strategies being employed by Alexander to affect an unopposed crossing, he was lucky that the night when he chose to conduct the operation was alive with thunder and lightning, as well as torrential rain. The round trip for Alexander's flanking force was of the order of 58km. considering the conditions and distance involved; we must seriously rethink the time-frame for the crossing. 29km was often a full day's march by the main army, and that was during the day.³⁹¹ This figure should be increased: the full host and baggage train was not present, but that is surely more than negated by the weather, the muddy ground and unknown terrain involved. A 29km night march in the conditions described in the sources would be challenging; a long night march coupled with a difficult river crossing for 9,000 infantry and 5,300 cavalry stretches credulity, especially when we consider an equally long march to Porus' camp and two battles also to be fought. With this in mind I would propose that Alexander marched to the crossing point and waited in the forests and gullies of the area; hence their prominence in Arrian's descriptions and their importance to Alexander in the selection of the crossing point. If Alexander set out at dusk, and that would have occurred even earlier than normal, given the thunderstorms and torrential rain described in Arrian, then he could have reached the crossing point perhaps at midnight or at the latest in the early hours of the morning. Once there, he rested his troops until just before dawn.³⁹²

Just before dawn, when it was still dark and the sky obscured by heavy clouds, the rain stopped and the wind died down a little from the violent gales of the previous night, another example of the many times in Alexander's career when luck played a significant part. It would have taken some considerable length of time to embark the army, get to the island, disembark and then find the ford and cross it safely in order to reach far shore. A number of trips would have been required given the limited numbers of transport vessels and inflatable straw rafts available. With regard to the island landing, I suspect that Arrian is correct in that it was unintentional; Alexander would have been aware of the existence of the islands somewhere in the river at that point, and would have had some idea of their extent having read the scouting reports that may have been provided for him, but he would have intended to avoid them during the crossing and

get straight from one bank to the other. It is easy to see, however, that during the total darkness of the night, coupled with the generally poor conditions of a river in spate, Alexander crossed a few hundred metres further upstream than he intended and landed on the island instead of the intended mainland. From the perspective of the historian, this is an understandable error and one that can be easily explained, but one that could have been disastrous had a ford from the island to the far bank not been found. Of the crossing, Arrian tells us:³⁹³

It was no easy task, as the water in the deepest part was up to the men's armpits and the horses' necks

This is a good indication, and few are ever really given, of the small size of warhorses in the ancient world. If they had been stranded on the island and had to re-embark before achieving the shore, Porus surely would have discovered the attempt and moved troops to oppose it. We should also remember that in all likelihood only the first batch of troops would have landed on the island; others would have realized the mistake and crossed at the originally intended point.

Initial Engagement

Alexander's crossing was witnessed by some of Porus' scouts who were too few in number to oppose the crossing. No doubt obeying orders, these men quickly rode back to Porus' camp to report the news; the Indian king would have known about the crossing within two hours of its commencement.³⁹⁴ This gap, coupled with the time it would take to muster a detachment of troops, and the time it would take to advance to the crossing point, would have been more than enough time for Alexander's advance force to cross the river safely. If Arrian's account is correct, then it is clear that Porus immediately knew this was a crossing by Alexander's forces, and not the expected reinforcements of Abisares that the vulgate claims.³⁹⁵ What Porus still did not know, of course, was the size of the crossing force; it could quite easily have been a diversion to move him away from camp and allow the bulk of the Macedonian army to cross unopposed. With this possibility in mind Porus first dispatched a rapid cavalry force to engage Alexander.

Arrian tells us that Alexander was prepared for an immediate engagement, and set up his forces accordingly.³⁹⁶ The Sacan horse-archers were deployed in a defensive screen ahead of the main force of infantry alongside the Saca cavalry, to their right, were the *agema* of Companion Cavalry. Arrian's text at this point is seriously defective: there is no mention at all of the left wing of cavalry, or of the Bactrians and the two hipparchies of Companions that we also know crossed.³⁹⁷ It is likely that the Bactrians were stationed on the left to play the role of the Thessalians, with the Companions stationed

alongside the *agema* on the right, but we have no positive proof of this. The order of battle of the infantry is equally confused by Arrian: there is no mention of the two *pezhetairoi taxeis* that crossed with Alexander. It is likely that these units were the last to cross the river, and may not have made the shore by the time the army set off south, thus have been omitted, but carelessly without a proper explanation. Some modern commentators have assumed, without discussion that the cavalry were set up *alongside* the infantry; but Arrian's text is quite specific that the cavalry were in front of the infantry.³⁹⁸ The battle order is no doubt in part connected with the cavalry crossing first, the infantry following later, as there were limited boats/rafts available.

Once the cavalry had crossed, Alexander probably felt that delay was unacceptable, and so he set off in the direction of Porus, and instructed the infantry to follow once safely across the river. This is not as foolish as it may at first appear, as there were three *taxis* of *pezhetairoi* who were waiting to cross and link up with Alexander closer to Porus' camp; therefore he would not be without infantry for long.

On the initial engagement, there are two major difficulties: the size of the Indian force, and the location of the skirmish. Arrian tells us that Aristobulus has the battle occur at the crossing point, or at least very close to it:³⁹⁹

According to Aristobulus, Porus' son arrived on the scene with sixty chariots before Alexander effected his second crossing – from the island, that is; and in view of the fact that the crossing was no easy matter even without opposition, he might have prevented it altogether if his Indians had left their chariots and attacked on foot Alexander's leading troops as they were trying to get on shore. But in point of fact he merely drove past, and permitted Alexander to cross without molestation.

This account of Aristobulus clearly cannot be correct. It seems inconceivable that Porus could have reacted so quickly to the news of the crossing to enable a force, even a small and rapid one, to reach the crossing point before Alexander had crossed. To allow his forces sufficient time to gain the shore safely was precisely why Alexander had chosen a crossing point 150 stades from the main camp. It is also inconceivable that, if Porus' son had arrived in time to engage the Macedonians as they crossed, he would have given up such a prime tactical advantage and allowed them to gain solid ground before offering battle. We know Porus was an honourable man, but this would be suicide from his son. Whilst the exact location of the skirmish is unknown, it is clear that it was not at the crossing point, but somewhere between there and Porus' main camp.

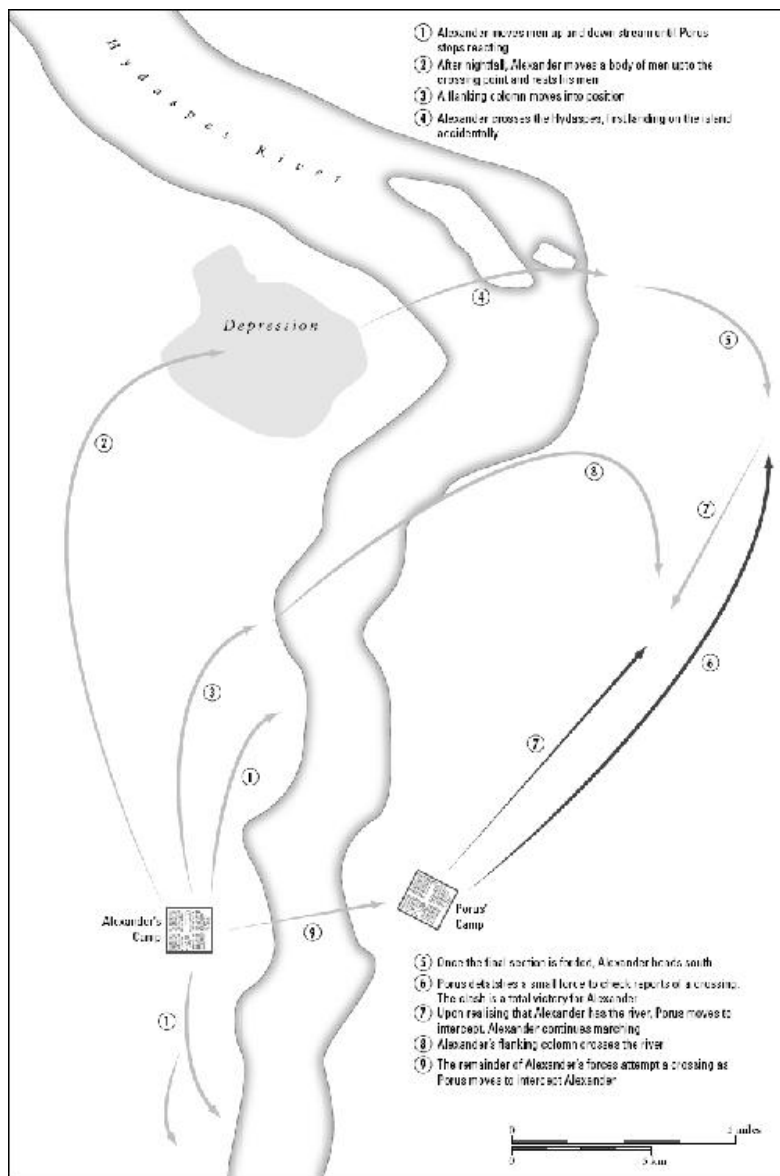
The size of the Indian force also presents difficulties: Aristobulus notes only 60 chariots, and suggested that these could have been extremely dangerous to Alexander had they dismounted and fought on foot at the

crossing point. Alexander's letter, reported in Plutarch, gives 1,000 cavalry and 60 chariots; Ptolemy has 2,000 cavalry and 120 chariots whilst Curtius gives the largest force at 4,000 cavalry and 100 chariots.⁴⁰⁰ Given the fact that this was a rapid reaction force of Indians, Ptolemy's figure seems plausible enough and is supported by the ease with which Alexander's 5,000 cavalry defeated them. The chariots presented no difficulties at all to the Macedonians: the heavy rain had left the terrain in a very boggy condition that reduced the effectiveness of the chariots to virtually zero, if they had managed to get there at all given the conditions, and the Indian cavalry were simply outclassed by the Macedonians and Saca horse-archers.

The Indian force was never intended to defeat Alexander, simply to prevent a crossing, or, failing that, to harry the Macedonians and report back on the size of the attacking force. That they were forced into battle and quickly routed speaks volumes as to the rapidity of movement of the Macedonian and allied cavalry units. Along with the defeat, Porus' son was killed in the skirmish; the survivors fled back to Porus with the news that Alexander was present in person and that he had successfully crossed the Hydaspes in force.⁴⁰¹

The Battle of the Hydaspes River

The survivors of the initial encounter reported to Porus that Alexander was marching towards him. This news must have dismayed Porus: his strategy had failed, both to keep Alexander from crossing and, if an engagement was required, to delay it until Abisares' reinforcements had arrived. Porus now had no choice but to risk a battle; he left some elephants and a small contingent of troops at the main camp site to prevent Craterus from crossing, and marched northwards towards the rapidly advancing Macedonians.



27. The Battle of the Hydaspes River: Initial Movements.

Conscious of the mud, Porus moved north until he came upon a relatively dry, sandy area, on a stretch of level ground, he halted and made final preparations for the coming battle. His order of battle is described in detail by Arrian:⁴⁰²

In the van he stationed his elephants at intervals of about 30m, on a broad front, to form a screen for the whole body of the infantry and to spread terror among the cavalry of Alexander ... Behind the elephants were the foot soldiers, though not on a front of equal

extent: the various units, forming the second line, were so disposed as to fill the intervals in the line with elephants. There were infantry on both wings as well, outflanking the elephants, and, finally, on both flanks of the infantry were the mounted units, each with a screen of war chariots.

Porus believed, with considerable justification, that his elephants were his greatest weapon; accordingly these were drawn up along the length of the front line. Both the numbers of elephants, and their spacing, are much debated in the sources.

Arrian claims that Porus commanded 200 elephants, and that they were spaced at around 30m. If this were the case it would make the line extend to a length of 6km, far too large for the proposed numbers of Indian infantry. Diodorus and Curtius give us more realistic numbers of elephants: 130 and 85 respectively.⁴⁰³ They do not supply the spacing between them, but if we accept Arrian's figure, then their battle lines would be 3.9km and 2.55km respectively, both of which still seem excessive. Polyaeus' statement was that the elephants were stationed 15m apart: whilst we still can not know how many elephants Porus had at his disposal, if we take the median figure of 130 then the battle line would extend 1.95km.⁴⁰⁴ If we assume that the tactical manuals are correct in that an infantryman needed around 0.9m⁴⁰⁵ in compact formation then that would mean 2,130 men spread across the front of the Indian line.

$$1950 \text{ (total front of line)} / 0.915 \text{ (space occupied by an individual)} = 2,130 \text{ (men across the front line)}$$

If the Indian troops were drawn up 14 men deep then we have a total force of Indian infantry of 29,820. We also know that the infantry extended beyond the elephants on either wing so the actual figure would be slightly higher; but it is almost exactly the figure provided by both Arrian and Curtius of 30,000. It is also the median figure for the size of the Indian infantry contingent from Diodorus' 50,000 and Plutarch's 20,000.

Can we assume that the Indian infantry were occupying 0.9m space? The 0.9m spacing in tight formation is an argument that comes from the size of the hoplite shields excavated at, amongst other places, Olympia; these shields ranged in size from 78.7cm to 100cm. Given that the individual soldier would have occupied rather less space than a shield of this diameter, the size of the shield is the critical factor in an estimation of the space occupied by a trooper.⁴⁰⁶ Less than 0.9m would have meant overlapping shields and an inability to use the spear properly, wider than this would have meant gaps opening up between the shield wall, and therefore this could hardly be described as a close formation.⁴⁰⁷ This argument does assume that the Indians were using shields of roughly the same size as those of a Greek hoplite, but even if the shield was smaller the men could not physically stand very much closer so a 0.9m frontage seems the most reasonable.

Whilst some members of the front line of Indian infantry were positioned between the elephants, the depth of the line would have meant that many extended behind them. We also know that the infantry were flanked on either side by cavalry wings in a typical ancient formation, and it is possible that Porus had enough chariots left over from the initial encounter, i.e. ones that were not sent with his son, to provide an advance screen in front of each wing of cavalry. Porus himself was in the front line sat atop the largest and most intelligent of the elephants at the extreme left of the elephant line. This can possibly be taken to be an indication that even in the near east and beyond, the tendency of hoplite armies to move to the right as they advanced was thoroughly ingrained as Porus stationed his best elephant in that area; although this was probably more to do with Porus' anticipation of Alexander launching his assault from his right. Whilst elephants would not react in the same way as infantrymen, Porus still elected to place his best troops on the left perhaps unconsciously, or perhaps to be closest to Alexander who was positioned on the Macedonian extreme right as was usual.

The sources are again at odds regarding the size of the cavalry forces on the Indian wings: Arrian has 4,000, Diodorus 3,000 and Plutarch 2,000, although he also mentions that 1,000 cavalry were included in the advance force that was defeated by Alexander; 2,000 cavalry on either wing seems plausible. There are two things that we can say with some certainty:

1. Porus was outnumbered in cavalry, even if Arrian's figure is correct. Alexander's cavalry strength probably stood at 5,300.
2. The Macedonian front was overlapped by the Indian line as at Gaugamela. 6,000 infantry occupied a frontage of around 700m if they were deployed eight ranks deep and in a compact formation.

The final element of Porus' force were the chariots, each capable of carrying an impressive six man crew. Diodorus has them at "more than a thousand", whilst both Arrian and Curtius claim 300.⁴⁰⁸ It is probably correct to assume that the 300 may have been the total contingent at the start of the campaign, and therefore included the 60 already lost in the initial engagement.⁴⁰⁹ A remaining force of around 240 is probably as close to the truth as we can get.

Alexander reached the battlefield far in advance of his infantry, but due to the fundamentally defensive nature of the Indian formation he was able to halt his advance and await the arrival of his infantry with little fear of interference from Porus. We can reasonably conclude that the delay was quite a lengthy one; a march of perhaps 15–25km would normally have taken the infantry the best part of a day: when we factor in the night march of an equivalent length and the crossing, the infantry must have been exhausted by the time they arrived. Arrian tells us that:⁴¹⁰

Alexander had no intention of making the fresh enemy troops a

present of his own breathless and exhausted men.

Once they did arrive, there was a further delay by Alexander, entirely sensibly, to allow them to rest before the final exertion of the battle. To facilitate the rest that was required by the infantry, and to confuse the enemy, Alexander ordered his cavalry to manoeuvre continually along the front of the line; this was partially intended to prevent the Indians from observing Alexander's final dispositions, and partly to hide the resting infantry from Porus.

It could be argued that Porus missed a golden opportunity to catch the Macedonians unprepared for battle, without being organized correctly and with the infantry exhausted from their long march; but I think this underestimates Porus. He evidently realized that a defensive posture was his best chance of victory whilst attempting to prevent Alexander's crossing, partly because his lack of numbers, partly due to a probable lack of quality in infantry and finally to the fact that he was awaiting reinforcements that he knew were on the way. The fact that the Macedonians chose to rest, and thus delay the battle, increased the chance that the army of Abisares would arrive to attack the Macedonians in the rear prior to, or during, the battle. This was essentially exactly like the Athenian delay at Marathon to give the Spartans as much time as possible to arrive; in both battles, of course, the expected reinforcements never arrived.

There is a further point, however: Porus' infantry almost certainly were not of the same quality as the Macedonians, and they may not have had the ability to advance in an unbroken line for any great distance. If he had attempted to advance on the unprepared Macedonians, any gaps that opened could easily have been exploited by even tired *pezhetairoi*; gaps of this kind were precisely what Porus had to avoid if he was to have any chance of victory. He would also know that his cavalry were fewer in number than their Macedonian equivalents. The real strength of the Indian army, and their main chance of victory, lay in their elephants. The Indian strategy was not, therefore, supine: Porus had simply recognized his own strengths and weaknesses, and was deploying his troops accordingly.⁴¹¹

None of the sources give a chronology for the time of the battle, but it can only have been late afternoon by the time the infantry arrived and were sufficiently rested for the battle to commence. This time interval, coupled with their lack of desire or ability to take the initiative, allowed the Indians to complete their final dispositions. It also allowed Alexander the opportunity to study the enemy, as he had done at Gaugamela, and make tactical adjustments accordingly.

Alexander easily deduced the Indian strategy: the elephants were placed at regular intervals with the infantry packed in close order between and behind them and the cavalry protecting each wing. It would have been evident to Alexander that Porus' basic tactic was to rely heavily upon his elephants;

therefore he would have expected the infantry and elephants to advance in a straight line, somewhat slowly, with the cavalry protecting the flanks. Alexander would have expected no tactical variations from this plan, as it would have led to the flanks of the infantry being compromised, or to gaps opening in the line. Porus' strategy was very rigid, but it suited the army at his disposal perfectly. With Porus' strategy evident, Alexander's response was first to eliminate the Indian cavalry to enable the flanking attack that he so preferred. By separating the cavalry from the elephants, who would have been incapable of adjusting their momentum to help without utterly destroying the formation, he would give himself the best chance of victory, and he would also be enacting his favoured strategy of attacking from two directions at once, from the front with the infantry and the sides with the cavalry, after the Indians were disposed of, of course.

Alexander opened the battle with an attack on the Indian left, coupled with the most discussed order in the entire battle – the order given to Coenus. The understanding of this is fundamental to the entire battle, and it therefore must be discussed in detail. There are three surviving versions of the order to Coenus. Arrian tells us:

Coenus was sent over to the Indian right with Demetrius' hipparchy and his own, his orders being that when the enemy moved their cavalry across to their left to counter the massed formations of the Macedonian mounted squadrons, he should hang on to their rear.

Curtius presents the actual words of Alexander, a later invention in all likelihood. Alexander turned to Coenus and said:

Together with Ptolemy, Perdikkas and Hephaestion I am going to attack the enemy left wing. When you see me in the thick of the fight, set our right wing in motion and attack the enemy while they are in confusion. Antigenes, Leonnatus, Tauron, you three will attack the centre and put pressure on their front.

Plutarch presents the shortest version:⁴¹²

Alexander, remembering the threat of the enemy's elephants and their superior numbers, attacked their left wing and ordered Coenus to charge against the right.

The first part of Arrian's statement has been interpreted in three ways, all of which I believe are incorrect. The first interpretation was that Coenus was sent to Alexander's right on the basis of references to Porus' left previously. Coenus was, therefore, already stationed on Alexander's right wing. The second interpretation was that Coenus was sent to Alexander's right, as a feint. The third is that Coenus was sent against the Indian right in order to attack it. The second comes closest to the truth as I hope to demonstrate.⁴¹³

The complexities of the order fall into two separate areas: Coenus'

command, and the tactical picture as a whole.⁴¹⁴ Firstly, Coenus' command: Curtius, along with Arrian, presents a picture of Coenus in command of the Macedonian left wing. We know with some certainty that he was formerly in command of an infantry *taxis*, and that he was separated from it and given the command of a hipparchy for this battle. There appears to be no other reference to his being in command of a hipparchy, yet here it is described as "his own" in exactly the same way as established commands like those of Craterus and Perdiccas. We also know that the infantry *taxis* that he had formerly commanded continued to bear his name, and continued to be commanded by him after the battle. The most confusing element of all is that the hipparchy appears from nowhere; it is not present in Arrian's detailed order of battle.

The most plausible theory, and one that deserves greater examination than it was originally given, was proposed more than one hundred years ago.⁴¹⁵ He suggested, briefly, that the hipparchy that carried his name did not consist of Macedonian Companion Cavalry at all, but comprised the Bactrian and Sogdian cavalry that are mentioned by Arrian at 5.12.2; these troops do not appear in the battle narrative a few pages later. The large body of cavalry on the right commanded directly by Alexander appears to have comprised the *agema*, the two hipparchies of Hephaestion and Perdiccas, and the Dahae horse-archers. The only cavalry troops omitted are the hipparchy of Demetrius and the Bactrian and Sogdian cavalry; there were probably eight hipparchies in India, but only four are attested at the battle, a clear indication in my view that Alexander had launched many more operations on the far side of the Hydaspes to mask his crossing than we have evidence for.

It is further reasonable not to invent cavalry troops that we have no positive evidence for, in the shape of another hipparchy. It is certain that Coenus held a cavalry command at the Hydaspes, and the only troops that do not have a commander are these Bactrian and Sogdian allied cavalry. We can also go further than this and suggest why Coenus was given command of these troops and not another individual, perhaps someone with more experience of cavalry operations. In the winter of 328/7, Coenus commanded a successful and final campaign in northern Sogdiana against Spitamenes. Shortly before the final battle of that campaign, Spitamenes recruited a large body of Bactrian and Sogdian cavalry; these evidently fought well in what Arrian describes as a "vigorous engagement", Spitamenes losing some 800 men and the Macedonians 25.⁴¹⁶ Coenus apparently made a sufficient impact upon the Bactrians and Sogdians as, while Spitamenes was attempting to make his escape, they deserted to Coenus' command. These cavalry troops were presumably the ones that, shortly after this, accompanied Alexander into India. The fact that Coenus had a pre-existing relationship with these troops, whose loyalty could easily be questioned, is, I would argue, the main reason that Coenus was given their command during the battle. Bosworth uses the fact of Coenus' pre-existing relationship with the Bactrian and

Sogdian cavalry to argue that Ptolemy probably would have emphasized this connection, noting that he had with him the unit of Demetrius and the horsemen whom he had led in Sogdiana. On this hypothesis, Coenus was temporarily detached from his own command, that of an infantry *taxis*, to take control of potentially difficult and dangerous troops, men whose loyalty was not absolutely certain, during the battle.

The tactical picture regarding the orders issued to Coenus has been much discussed; many historians have adopted an approach that is far too analytical and source-critical, resulting in self-imposed difficulties.⁴¹⁷ Arrian's text is relatively simple to follow and is coherent with other sources.

Coenus' initial position in the line is clear from the text of Arrian. The infantry had arrived and were rested after a long march. These were then drawn up in the centre as usual, facing the opposing infantry and elephants, but with explicit orders not to engage the enemy. The initial assault was to be conducted by Alexander and the Companion Cavalry stationed to the right of the infantry, against the Indian left flank: again this was almost always Alexander's opening gambit. The statement presented by both Plutarch and Curtius that he (Coenus) was ordered to attack the right would likely have to mean the Indian right, but this is not specified in the sources.⁴¹⁸ A statement that Coenus was ordered to attack the right could refer to an attack on the Macedonian right, but if so, this is explicable as we shall see. If this were the case, then Coenus was essentially playing the role of Parmenio, although in a more aggressive fashion than the old general was usually ordered to do.

Coenus' role was likely some kind of feint.⁴¹⁹ ὥς ἐπὶ can be interpreted to mean exactly that. Arrian frequently uses ὥς ἐπὶ and ἐπὶ interchangeably and are simply variants of each other.⁴²⁰

Although we seemingly cannot use Arrian's language to argue conclusively for anything untoward in Coenus' orders, perhaps it can be used as supporting evidence. It seems that Arrian does use ὥς ἐπὶ on occasion to refer to a feint, but that it does not exclusively mean that. We also know that Coenus was ordered to hold off his attack until the cavalry on the Indian right wing had moved to reinforce the Indian left that would be under attack from Alexander. Once they began to move, he was to pursue them behind the Indian lines and attack them in the rear as they arrived to support Porus' left wing. We must ask the simple question, why would the Indian right wing move, or be ordered to move, in support of the Indian left if they were standing opposite a significant body of enemy cavalry? This would quite simply be courting disaster by inviting the flanking attack that Alexander so coveted. The answer is simply that they would not, so something else must have occurred. I believe that Coenus was initially stationed with Alexander on the Macedonian right, but was ordered to circle around the right flank of the Indian army once the Indian cavalry had begun

to move. Arrian's use of *ὡς ἐπὶ* could refer to this; whilst it was not specifically a feint attack as he did not engage the enemy, he was simply being kept away from the area of the line that he was assigned to attack until the most opportune moment. As far as the Indians were concerned, all of Alexander's cavalry were concentrated against their left and thus reinforcing this sector with cavalry from the right that were not engaged was a sensible tactic; it is unfortunate for Porus that this was exactly what Alexander's tactic required.

The presence of a large body of Macedonian cavalry on the Indian left forced Porus to reinforce that sector; the move was therefore fundamentally defensive and caused not by a perceived weakness, but as a counter to Alexander's superiority in numbers.⁴²¹ If we look at the battle from Porus' point of view for a moment, and apply the flanking tactics that Alexander was so fond of, Porus was presented with a golden opportunity to attack the Macedonian heavy infantry in the flank or rear; something that Alexander would certainly have done while expecting his outnumbered cavalry (usually the Thessalians in earlier battles) to hold their position long enough for the battle to be won. As noted, however, Porus' strategy was fundamentally defensive, and thus the cavalry moved to reinforce the Indian left should be seen in that light. Even after the detachment of Coenus, Alexander would have perhaps 3,000 cavalry and the Indians 2,000; hardly an overwhelming disadvantage for the Indians, and yet still they chose to reinforce this sector. I would count this as Porus' biggest mistake in the entire battle; failing to take the opportunity for a flanking attack, and choosing a defensive posture automatically. Porus was essentially putting total faith in the ability of his elephants to defeat the Macedonian centre, a battle that had not yet even been joined.

We must also consider the location of the movement of Coenus' cavalry, and of the Indian detachment. Was it between the lines or behind them? Most modern commentators assume that the cavalry passed between the lines, i.e. in front of the elephants. This is an area where more recent scholarship has changed its view, and most now assume that the Indians moved behind their own lines to reinforce their left wing, and I think this is the correct interpretation.⁴²² If we are assuming, as I have done, that Coenus' cavalry units started out on the Macedonian right along with Alexander, then we must also ask the question of their movements.⁴²³ The sources clearly give us the impression that stealth was required of Coenus, and thus a movement behind the Greek line would seem sensible. We must also note that a movement in front of the Greek lines would mean them coming closer to the elephants that they would have been desperate to avoid; although they would not have actually engaged them. It was the noise of the elephants trumpeting that would frighten the Macedonian horses, and this was to be avoided at all costs, hence Alexander's orders for the flank attack in the first place.

There is the possibility that the orders to Coenus that we have preserved in the sources are not the full extent of the orders given to him. Coenus was only given orders based upon the eventuality of the Indian right moving to reinforce its left; no mention was given of what he was to do if that move did not occur. Arrian may have missed out the first part of the order, that which would deal with this situation. If Arrian's text is defective it is more likely to be Ptolemy who is at fault, given that Arrian did preserve the orders to Craterus in great detail only a few pages previously.

If I am correct that Coenus was initially stationed on the right, which made the Indian movement of troops far more likely, then we have a slightly different tactical situation. The brevity of the orders to Coenus would make sense; if the Indians moved, then he was to circle round the Macedonian left and follow the Indian cavalry, eventually implementing a flanking attack. If the Indians did not move, then he would simply stay with the right and overwhelm the Indian cavalry on their left quickly and easily, following this up with the flanking attack from that direction, and the concomitant encirclement of the Indian infantry. If this second eventuality came to pass, then Alexander would have been implementing the strategy that had brought him victory in every set-piece battle of his career; a victory that would be primarily won by himself and the Companion Cavalry. With this in mind it is more than possible that this was Alexander's strategy; he prepared for both possibilities, of the Indian cavalry moving, or of it staying put: both would result in a flanking attack and encirclement of the Indian centre. Both would also limit the amount of time that his heavy infantry would have to engage the Indian elephants.

The orders to Coenus are followed immediately by the orders given to the infantry commanders, and these are equally problematic. Arrian mentions three individuals, Seleucus, Antigenes and Tauron. Curtius also notes three infantry commanders, but omits Seleucus, and instead includes Leonnatus. Neither Arrian nor Curtius make any reference to Cleitus, whose *taxis* we know to have been present at the battle, and who should have been named.⁴²⁴ Seleucus appears to have been in command of the hypaspists by this time, and Tauron commanded the light armed troops including the archers.⁴²⁵ Antigenes makes his first appearance in the sources here, and in Arrian he only re-emerges in command of one of the *pezhetairoi taxis* which Craterus marched through the central provinces on the return to Babylon. The missing *taxis* whose command was assumed by Antigenes can only have been that of Cleitus who we know was transferred to the command of a hipparchy after the battle. We do not know where Cleitus was at this point, but he does not appear to have taken part in the battle, perhaps as a result of some illness or wound. With regard to the infantry commanders, the identification of Leonnatus is the only outstanding issue. It has been argued that he was one of Alexander's bodyguards, but he could equally be the son of Antipater who we know was a trierarch at the Hydaspes. If Antigenes

commanded Cleitus' *taxis*, then Leonnatus was in command of Coenus' *taxis*. The reverse is also possible; the effect is the same.⁴²⁶

With regard to the actual orders to the infantry commanders, Arrian tells us that they were:

not to engage until it was evident that the Indians, both horse and foot, had been thrown into confusion by the Macedonian cavalry.

This is, of course, the crux of the matter, and provides us with ample information on Alexander's tactics for the battle, particularly when examined in conjunction with the orders to Coenus. Arrian tells us clearly, with no room for ambiguity, that the infantry were not to engage the enemy until they were in visible confusion as a result of his own flanking attack. The discipline of the Macedonian infantry, and of their commanders, is clearly demonstrated by the fact that this command was followed to the letter; the infantry only advanced when the Indian cavalry had been defeated and confusion reigned in the centre because some cavalry troops had fallen back onto the elephants and the infantry. This is problematic, however; if the cavalry battle took place on the Macedonian right, how could the Indian cavalry have retreated through the Indian centre? I will try to explain how this was possible below. Porus' fundamentally defensive strategy made it easy for the Macedonian infantry to stay out of the battle until the opportune moment, but we can also assume that less disciplined commanders might not have been able to prevent their men from engaging too soon.

The initial attacks by the horse-archers were a vital element in the battle, as is recognized in the casualty lists. Their repeated attacks were all but impossible for the defenders to counter without dangerous gaps opening up. If the Indians had charged then Alexander would have had the situation he often craved, that of using a relatively minor unit to draw the enemy out of their pre-prepared positions to allow his favoured flanking attack. This was the case at the Granicus and at Gaugamela at the very least. This continued harassment prevented the Indian cavalry from reorganizing themselves in order to meet the coming charge from the Companion Cavalry.⁴²⁷

At this point in the battle, Alexander appears to have implemented a version of the same tactic that he used to open the battle of Gaugamela: he appears to have made an oblique movement to his right, away from the infantry, in order to make a flanking attack rather than a frontal attack against the Indian cavalry.⁴²⁸ This was for two good tactical reasons; firstly the horse-archers would impede a direct frontal charge, and secondly Alexander's favoured strategy was to always attack an enemy in two directions simultaneously wherever possible. Alexander's movement forced the Indians to counter by extending their own line in an attempt to prevent a flanking attack.

Porus hoped that the arriving troops from his right flank would fill in any gaps that opened up as a result of his extending line. The brilliance of

Alexander is that he had foreseen this tactic, and Coenus' orders were specifically designed to counter it. As the Indians began to transfer from their right to left, Coenus began his movement from the Macedonian right, encircling behind the Macedonian line and then following the Indian cavalry behind the Indian line. The Indian transfer would have been all but complete when they realized Coenus' cavalry were making a move to follow them. This was a disaster for Porus' strategy; if he continued to reinforce his right, then he would be attacked in the rear by Coenus' cavalry, if he turned his cavalry around to meet this threat, then gaps would inevitably open up in his left wing as it continued to extend. Porus' only solution was to divide the reinforcing cavalry into two; the strongest elements would move to the left wing, the weaker troops would wheel around and face the new threat posed by Coenus. Arrian notes that this division of forces by Porus was a disaster, both in terms of the confusion it created and for Porus' strategy as a whole.⁴²⁹

In typical fashion, Alexander saw his moment to strike. As the Indians were extending their line on the one hand, and dividing their forces on the other, Alexander launched his flanking attack against the Indian cavalry. The Indians had, evidently, not been able to extend their line far enough to prevent Alexander from flanking it, largely because of a numerical inferiority. This was a critical moment in the battle, and Alexander was victorious without bloodshed to the Companions. Arrian tells us that:⁴³⁰

the Indians did not even wait to receive his charge, but fell back into confusion on the elephants, their impregnable fortress – or so they hoped.

The vulgate tradition only records the bare fact of the successful charge by the Companions, before moving to the more sensationalist material of the battle with the elephants.⁴³¹

Porus' carefully laid defensive strategy was in tatters; he was forced to move his elephants against the Companion Cavalry in order to prevent a flanking attack and the total destruction of his cavalry.⁴³² The movement away from the centre gave the Macedonian centre the opportunity it was waiting for to take the offensive and finally join the battle: although Curtius strongly implies that they were already engaged by this point, this seems unlikely as the timing would have been poor: the tactical situation would not yet have been right. The confusion in the Indian ranks was rife at this point; all tactical cohesion had been lost. Curtius tells us that a small number of elephants led by Porus moved against the Macedonian centre in an effort to break the Greek infantry. The Macedonians were initially successful in the centre, but the reappearance of the elephants changed things: “Victors moments before, the Macedonians were now casting around for places to flee”.

Alexander, realizing that his heavy infantry were singularly ill-equipped to

deal with the elephants, moved his Agrianians and Thracian light-armed troops against the elephants and their mahouts. These skirmishers used javelins against the elephants and drivers, as well as the pressure exerted from the heavy infantry who had evidently regained some composure after the initial elephant charge. Curtius graphically described Macedonians being trampled by enraged elephants, as well as elephants picking up fully armed men and passing them over their heads to their drivers to be despatched. Arrian describes the battle as like no other Alexander ever fought; the success of the elephants filled the Indian cavalry with renewed courage and the recovered enough to make a coherent attack upon the Companion Cavalry, but ultimately they were no match for the Macedonians and they broke again. At some point during the confusion, Arrian tells us that Coenus reformed with Alexander's cavalry into a single body that made successive attacks on the Indian cavalry, and we can assume flanking attacks against the infantry given that this was one of Alexander's favoured strategies.⁴³³

The pressure exerted by the skirmishers and heavy infantry from the front, and the Companion Cavalry and Dahae horse-archers from the right forced the elephants back onto their own troops in confusion; many of the mahouts who might have been able to maintain a semblance of control by now having been killed. Arrian graphically tells us:⁴³⁴

they trampled to death as many of their friends as enemies. The result was that the Indian cavalry, jammed in around the elephants and with no more space to manoeuvre than they had, suffered severely; ... many of the animals had been wounded, while others, riderless and bewildered, ceased altogether to play their expected part, and, maddened by pain and fear, set indiscriminately upon friend and foe, thrusting, trampling, and spreading death before them.

The Macedonian infantry were in a better position to deal with the maddened elephants, having more space to manoeuvre and escape, but the Indians, trapped as they were, suffered badly.

The battle wore on into the evening and, the elephants gradually became exhausted, their charges became ever feebler. Alexander again seized his chance and surrounded what remained of the entire Indian army, signalling for his infantry to lock shields and advance upon the enemy in a solid mass.⁴³⁵ The expression “lock shields” used in Arrian is curious; if the heavy infantry were equipped as we might expect them to have been, with *sarissa* and *pelta*, then it would quite simply have been impossible to “lock shields”: the *pelta* was too small. It is possible that on occasion the Macedonian heavy infantry would have commandeered the hoplite shields of the allies and mercenaries, but I'm not convinced that is what occurred here. The night crossing of a river in spate would be difficult enough with the small shield, doubly so with a larger one. If the infantry were still equipped with the *pelta*

then the order reported by Arrian is simply a reference to forming in the most compact formation available, not literally to “lock shields”. Following the same argument as used with the shield, I am not convinced that the sarissa was used at the Hydaspes for much the same reason. The sarissa is not specifically mentioned at the Hydaspes by any source, and indeed it is not mentioned at all after Gaugamela. For the Hydaspes I believe the infantry were equipped with the *pelta* and hoplite spear which I believe would have been carried with the army in great numbers for just such an occasion.

There is some evidence that the sarissa was used at the Hydaspes. Alexander produced decadrachms of the battle depicting Porus as a mahout being attacked by a Macedonian infantryman wielding a spear of such length that it can only have been a sarissa; this was likely a stylized depiction showing the *pezhetairoi* wielding the iconic weapon of the Macedonian heavy infantry, rather than an actual representation of events.⁴³⁶

The Indian cavalry and Infantry suffered severe losses, and those that were able to flee through any small gap in the Macedonian cavalry line did so. These were hunted down mercilessly by Craterus' fresh troops that had been crossing the Hydaspes during the battle. Arrian tells us that Craterus began to cross when he saw Alexander's triumphant success; but this cannot be the case: if he was able to overcome the Indian troops still left at the main camp, and chase down fleeing Indians, he must have begun crossing as soon as the battle was joined to allow enough time to ferry across sufficient troops to be effective. Porus surrendered to Alexander only when there was obviously no chance of victory, and their exchange is well known, but not relevant here save to say that Porus was reinstated in his kingdom which was also subsequently expanded. If Porus' enemies had been hoping to use Alexander to remove him from power, and thus increase the size of their own kingdom, they had spectacularly misjudged the new Great King.

Losses

Only Arrian and Diodorus provide us with casualty figures for the battle. Arrian's figures are atrocious, yet expected, underestimates as far as Macedonian losses are concerned: 80 Infantry and 230 cavalry. Diodorus' figures are a little more realistic: 280 cavalry and over 700 infantry. Arrian's infantry figure, however, is specific only to the force “which had been 6,000 strong in the first attack”.⁴³⁷

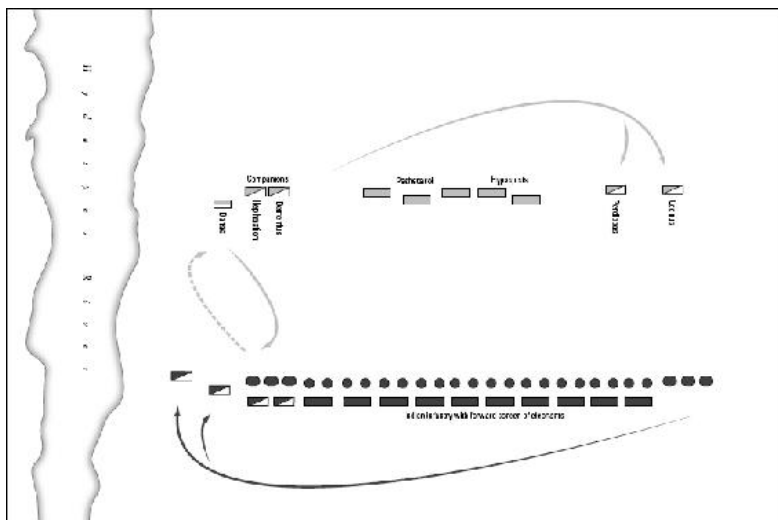
This 6,000 is a reference to the two *taxeis* and the total of the hypaspists. If we can assume that there would have been losses amongst the light infantry, those that were in amongst the elephants most of the time, then Diodorus' figure looks the more realistic.

The recorded losses for the Indians are the converse of the Macedonian: unbelievably high. Arrian gives 20,000 infantry and 3,000 cavalry, Diodorus does not distinguish between troop type but gives 12,000 dead and 9,000 prisoners; almost the same total number. Both also note the capture of the surviving elephants and the destruction of all of the Indian chariots. The only thing that we can really learn from the figures for losses was that the fighting was hard, Macedonian losses were relatively high with the Indian losses being significantly higher; more than this we are not in a position to say.

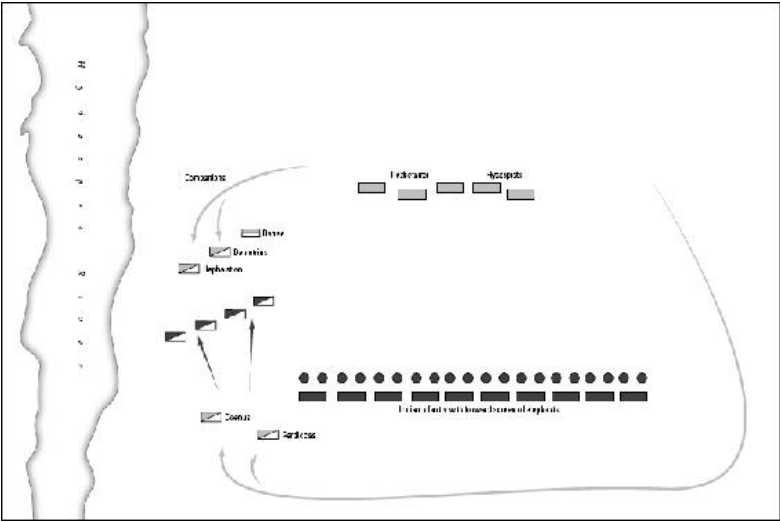
The Hydaspes campaign was intricately planned by Alexander; he again saw a means of recycling an earlier strategy with great success, that of crossing the river upstream and unopposed as I believe occurred at the Granicus seven years earlier. Alexander managed to effect a potentially extremely tricky crossing of a major river in spite and tricked Porus to allow him the time to do so unopposed. The main battle also shows tremendous tactical and strategic planning. He immediately determined Porus' strategy and the greatest strength of the enemy army and designed a strategy of his own to counter it. The orders to Coenus were a gamble, but one that was calculated against Porus' defensive strategy. Alexander gambled that, concentrating all of his cavalry initially on his own right (so I believe), he would force Porus to concentrate his cavalry in that same sector, and that Porus would not take the opportunity to launch a flanking attack on Alexander's infantry. The orders to Coenus were nothing short of brilliant when taken in conjunction with another recycled strategy, that of a movement to the right to extend the enemy's front and force gaps, first used of course at Gaugamela. The third brilliant use of an old strategy was to draw out the enemy cavalry onto terrain of his own choosing by the use of his Dahae horse-archers; some would have to be sacrificed for this to work, but they were not Macedonian and therefore Alexander would not have been bothered unduly by this. The sacrifice of a few non-Macedonian troops to achieve victory over Porus was a small price to pay, and one that had been paid previously during all of his set-piece battles.



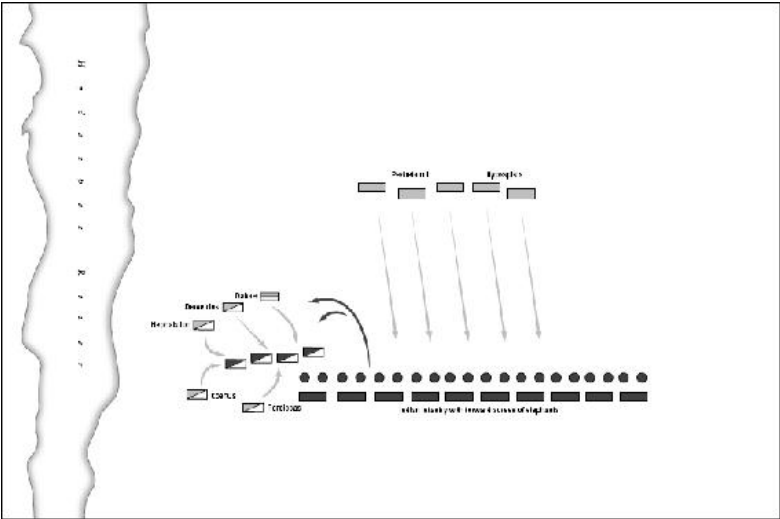
28. The Battle of the Hydaspes River, Phase 1: Initial dispositions.



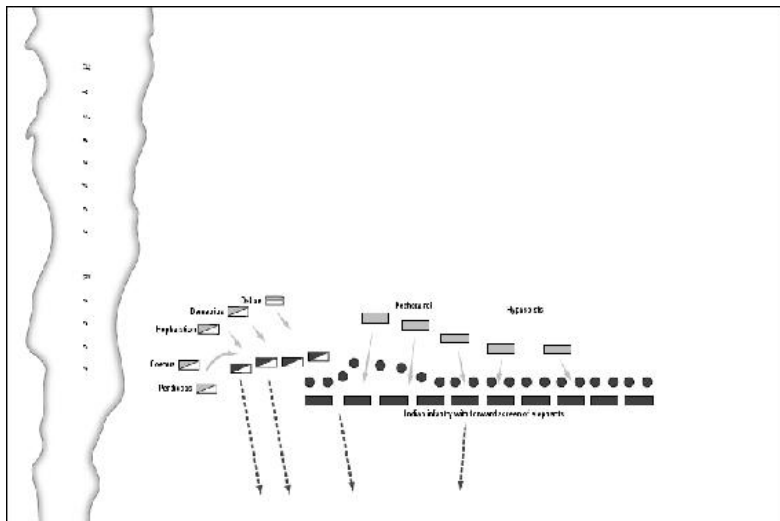
29. The Battle of the Hydaspes River, Phase 2:



30. The Battle of the Hydaspes River, Phase 3:



31. The Battle of the Hydaspes River, Phase 4:



32. The Battle of the Hydaspes River, Phase 5:

Notes

- 1 A still useful discussion of these issues is Whatley 1964 (written in 1920).
- 2 Bosworth 2003b, 7.
- 3 Worthington 2003, 1.
- 4 For numismatics, see Dahmen 2007. Demosthenes 18.270; Aeschines 3.133, 3.160–164, 3.165; Dinarchus 1.34; cf. Worthington 2003, 6.
- 5 Pearson 1960, 22–49; Badian 1964, 251–2; 1965c, 1–8; Bosworth 2003b, 7.
- 6 For the *Ephemerides*, see Bosworth 1988b, ch. 7; for bias, see Bosworth 2003b, 8.
- 7 Arrian, *Indica* 18–42.
- 8 Bosworth 2003b, 8.
- 9 Polybius 12.17.1–22.7; cf. Walbank 1967, 364ff.
- 10 Polybius 12.18.2ff (on troop numbers); 18.11–12 (on how the difficulties of the terrain enhanced the Macedonian achievement); 20.6–8, 22.4 (rigidity of phalanx). Cf. Bosworth 2003b, 8–14; 1976, 25–32.
- 11 Strabo 17.1.43 (814) = *FGrH* 124 F 14a. Cf. Pearson 1960, 33–6; Bosworth 1977a, 68–75; 2003b, 9. Plutarch, *Alex.* 27.4 = *FGrH* 124 F 14b.
- 12 Plutarch, *Alex.* 33.1 = *FGrH* 124 F 36. Cf. Bosworth 1977a, 57–60.
- 13 Polybius 12.19.1–2, 5–6, 20.1. Bosworth 2003b, 9.
- 14 Bosworth 2003b, 10. *FGrH* 137 F 18–19, 21–2; 137 F 13, 16.
- 15 Bosworth 2003b, 10. Hammond 1983, 2.
- 16 Hamilton 1969, xlix–lii; Hammond 1983, 170 n.5; Bosworth 2003b, 11.
- 17 Curtius 9.8.15 = *FGrH* 137 F 25.
- 18 Diodorus 17.102.5–7.
- 19 Bosworth 2003b, 11.
- 20 Arrian 1, preface.
- 21 Bosworth 1980, 16.
- 22 Arrian 1.1.4; cf. 1.4.6. Bosworth 1980, 16; Strasburger 1934; Kornemann 1935; cf. Pearson 1960, 195f.; Bosworth 1980, 16.
- 23 Bosworth 2003b, 13.
- 24 Arrian 3.9.3–4.
- 25 Whatley 1964, 127.
- 26 Arrian 1.18.6–9 (Miletus); 2.25.2–3 (Euphrates); 3.10.1–2 (Gaugamela); 3.18.12 (Persepolis).
- 27 Arrian 1.13.2; Plutarch, *Alex.* 16.1.
- 28 *Contra* Hammond 1996, 40, who believes that Arrian largely followed Ptolemy and Plutarch largely followed Aristobulus.
- 29 Bosworth 1980, 138.
- 30 Devine 1986, 89–90. For “childish and worthless”, see Hammond 1980, 138.
- 31 Hanson 2005, 143–4.
- 32 Arrian 1.13–16; Diodorus 17.19–21.
- 33 All of our sources agree that a message was sent: Arrian 3.15.1; Curtius 4.16.2;

- Diodorus 17.60.7; Plutarch, *Alex.* 33.9. *Contra* Rhodes 2006, 364.
- 34 Burne 1956.
- 35 Plutarch, *Alex.* 25.4; Marsden 1971; Curtius 4.6.11.
- 36 Thucydides 2.77.
- 37 Thucydides 4.100.
- 38 Arrian 1.1.4–1.9.8; the Illyrian campaign to the fall of Thebes. Strabo 7.3.8ff.; Diodorus 17.8.1ff.
- 39 Arrian 1.2.7; 4.6. Bosworth 1980, 51, believes that this whole section is taken directly from Ptolemy and I see no reason to dissent from this view. Papazoglu 1978, 25 n.39, and Pearson 1960, 205f., also take this line, *contra* Hammond 1974, 77, who sees both Ptolemy and Aristobulus as Arrian's sources for this section.
- 40 Arrian 1.1.4; Diodorus 17.3.5; Ashley 1998, 166.
- 41 Arrian 1.1.5; 5.3. Bosworth 1980, 52.
- 42 Bosworth 1980, 54; see also Ashley 1998, 168; Bosworth 1988, 29; Hammond 1980b, 46.
- 43 Wilcken 1932, 67; Hamilton 1969, 46, supporting the Shipka Pass as the location of the encounter. For the height of the passes, see Bloedow 1996, 120.
- 44 Arrian 1.1.7.
- 45 Milns 1968, 36.
- 46 Bloedow 1996, 121.
- 47 Arrian 1.1.7–9.
- 48 Sekunda 1984, 27, uses this incident to argue that the Macedonian heavy infantry would have been equipped with a large shield; *contra* English 2009, 23–25.
- 49 Bosworth 1980, 56; Papazoglu 1978, 30–31; Green 1991, 127, seems more confident, identifying it as the River Yantra; Hammond 1980b, 46, identifies it with the Rositsa.
- 50 Arrian 1.2.2.
- 51 Devine 1988, 3.
- 52 Both men are mentioned as *ilarchs* at Gaugamela (Arrian 3.11.8) but are otherwise fairly obscure. Bosworth 1980, 58; for Heracleides and Sopolis, see Heckel 1992, 348 and 351, respectively.
- 53 Arrian 1.2.6 likely uses the term *akontismos* generally, rather than referring to horse-archers.
- 54 Arrian 1.2.7.
- 55 Arrian 1.3.5.
- 56 Arrian 1.4.2.
- 57 Hammond 1974, 80. We know the crossing of the Danube was in June as Arrian (1.4.1) tells us the “grain stood high” and needed to be flattened by the infantry.
- 58 English 2009.
- 59 There were 7,000 troops from the Balkans at the Hellespont: Diodorus 17.17.4.
- 60 Arrian 1.10.1.
- 61 Xen., *Hell.* 5.1.25.
- 62 Arrian 1.12.8–10.
- 63 Strabo 587. This assumes that the identifications by Foss (1977, 495) of the Aesopus and Priapus are correct; the general location of the Granicus, however, does seem universally accepted. Cf. Foss 1977, 495; Hammond 1980, 76ff.;

- Bosworth 1980, 114.
- 64 Plutarch, *Alex.* 16.1, now known as the Dimetoka Gap. Foss (in Barrington 2000, 52 B4) identifies Cyzicus with the modern Belkiz Kale.
- 65 Arrian 1.13.4; 14.4. Plutarch, *Alex.* 16.3; Diodorus 17.19.2.
- 66 Arrian 1.14.7.
- 67 Badian 1980, 282, following Foss 1977, 500, takes the line that the course has not changed.
- 68 Diodorus 17.19–21; Arrian 1.13–16; Plutarch, *Alex.* 16; Justin 11.6.8–13.
- 69 Diodorus 17.19.1–2, with the infantry presumably behind them.
- 70 Diodorus 17.19.3.
- 71 Diodorus 17.19.4.
- 72 Both quotes are from Diodorus 17.19.5.
- 73 Justin 11.6.11; Arrian 1.14.4.
- 74 Diodorus 17.20.1.
- 75 Polybius 6.25; Arrian 1.6.5; 4.23.2.
- 76 Diodorus 17.20.5.
- 77 Diodorus 17.21.5–6; Plutarch, *Alex.* 16.7 (following Aristobulus: Bosworth 1980, 124), gives Persian losses at 2,500 cavalry and 20,000 infantry; Arrian 1.16.2, gives only 1,000 cavalry whilst almost all of the infantry were killed. Diodorus 17.21.4.
- 78 Arrian 1.13.2; the others are 1.18.6–9 (Miletus), 2.25.2–3 (Euphrates), 3.10.1–2 (Gaugamela), and 3.18.12 (Persepolis).
- 79 Bosworth 1980, 115.
- 80 For example: Lehmann 1911, 243; Lane Fox 1973, 121–2. Green 1991, 489–512, has a rather different interpretation; he at first believed that Alexander fought Arrian's battle across the river and lost, and followed this by fighting Diodorus' battle and gained victory. This is an extremely clever theory, and, although I do not agree with it, my own reconstruction of the battle was inspired by it. I note, however, that in the preface to the 1991 edition of his book (updating the 1974 work), Green rejects the theory, stating that “new studies have convinced me that I was flat wrong”. Whilst I think the theory was incorrect, I have adapted it into what I believe to be a very plausible reconstruction of the battle.
- 81 Arrian 1.14.1. See Ashley 1998, 194, for a useful depiction of the dispositions of both armies. No mention is made in Arrian of the allied infantry or mercenaries.
- 82 Harl 1997, 310 with n.21. *Contra* Hammond 1980, 83–4, suggests the Macedonian front occupied 2.5km, 1.5km for the infantry with each wing taking up 500m. Cf. Polybius 12.19.6; 21.8; Arrian 1.14.4.
- 83 Badian 1977, 283f.; see also Judeich 1908, 389, who was first to suggest this.
- 84 Bosworth 1980, 120; Berve 1926, 1.22.4–7,
- 85 *Contra* Heckel 2005, 234, believes him to be a Ptolemy other than the famous historian.
- 86 For example at Arrian 6.8.7.
- 87 Arrian 1.14.7.
- 88 Bosworth 1980, 121; Hammond 1980, 75.
- 89 Arrian 1.15.3.
- 90 Arrian 1.15.7; only Arrian describes Mithridates' role in the battle.
- 91 Bosworth 1980, 123.

- 92 Arrian 1.16.2.
- 93 Badian 1977, 271 n.2, describes Plutarch's account as "rhetorically inflated and has no other independent value"; Justin 6.10–12.
- 94 Arrian 1.12.8.
- 95 Arrian 1.12.9–10; Ashley 1998, 190.
- 96 Devine 1988, 7; Harl 1997, 306; Badian 1977, 283. Bosworth 1980, 113 notes that Arsites' son, Mithropastes, was exiled to the Persian Gulf after the battle (Nearchus, *FGrH* 133 F 27–8) and therefore Darius perhaps did blame Arsites for the defeat.
- 97 Bosworth 1980, 112–3; Harl 1997, 306.
- 98 Davis 1964, 36.
- 99 Hammond 1980b, 68; Devine 1988, 7; Davis 1964, 36. Plutarch *Alex.* 16.2.
- 100 Devine 1988, 7.
- 101 Plutarch, *Alex.* 16.1. Badian 1977, 280 claims early May. Janke 1904, 140 established a hundred years ago that the river was shallow and easily fordable at that time of year; the observations of Foss 1977 agree.
- 102 Diodorus 17.17.19. It is interesting to note that one of the few historians who use the Diodorus version of the battle, Lane Fox 1973, 121, actually denies the debate occurred, even though this version is essentially based upon the advice being acted upon.
- 103 Devine 1988, 8.
- 104 Arrian 1.14.3; cf. Heckel 1992, 358–61.
- 105 Plutarch, *Alex.* 16.4.
- 106 Arrian 5.10.1ff.
- 107 Arrian 1.14.6; Bosworth 1980, 120.
- 108 As Lane Fox 1973, 122 does.
- 109 See Hanson 1989, 180–84 for the victors' desire and instinct to pursue the vanquished.
- 110 Harl 1997, 305 estimates no more than 20 minutes. Badian 1977, 290, on javelins.
- 111 Plutarch, *Alex.* 16.12. Hamilton 1969, 41 argued that the Persians had no native infantry at all. Diodorus 17.19.4; Arrian 1.16.1; Bosworth 1980, 124. Devine 1988 also sees them as *Hamippoi*, light infantry who fought alongside cavalry.
- 112 Arrian 1.16.2; Diodorus 17.21.6; Plutarch, *Alex.* 16.15 (following Aristobulus).
- 113 Plutarch, *Alex.* 16.13–14; Bosworth 1980, 124–5.
- 114 Badian 1977, 275; although he confusingly concedes (1977, 275 n.16) that Ptolemy was also present. *Contra* Hammond 1996, 40, believes that Arrian largely followed Ptolemy and Plutarch largely followed Aristobulus.
- 115 Bosworth 1980, 115.
- 116 Pearson 1960, 204.
- 117 Arrian 1.17.3.
- 118 Arrian 1.28.1.
- 119 Curtius 3.1.6–8.
- 120 Tarn 1948, 2.110. Arrian 1.29.3; cf. Curtius 4.1.35, for three further references to Antigonus' activities after Issus.
- 121 Arrian 2.1.1.
- 122 Diodorus 17.29.2.

- 123 Arrian 2.1.4.
- 124 Arrian 2.2.2.
- 125 Much of the topographical information is taken from Devine 1985a, 26.
- 126 Bosworth 1988, 55.
- 127 Berve 1926, 2. 388; Bosworth 1980, 191.
- 128 Diodorus 17.32.2; Curtius 3.7.5–7; Arrian 2.6.1.
- 129 Arrian 2.5.8; 6.1.
- 130 Curtius 3.2.1–9; Bosworth 1988, 53.
- 131 Arrian 3.16.7.
- 132 Two months is also the time calculated by Devine 1985a, 27.
- 133 Calculated from Arrian 2.6.1–2, 2.7.1–2, 2.8.1ff.; cf. Murison 1972, 404.
- 134 Curtius 3.8.13–14; Arrian 2.7.1.
- 135 Xen., *Anab.* 1.4.3–4.
- 136 Arrian 2.7.2; 5.1.
- 137 Curtius 3.8.13, 18; Polybius 12.17.2; Arrian 2.7.1, all state that Darius approached Issus via the Amanid Gates. Atkinson 1980, 196; Murison 1972, 408.
- 138 Murison 1972, 409.
- 139 Bauer 1899, 123; Dittberner 1908, 79; Domaszewski 1925, 60–61; Judeich 1929, 360 n.2.
- 140 Curtius 3.8.10–11; cf. Plutarch, *Alex.* 19.1; Diodorus 17.32.3.
- 141 Arrian 2.6.3; Curtius 3.3.1.
- 142 Curtius 3.2.10–19; Diodorus 17.30.2–3.
- 143 Plutarch, *Alex.* 19.1–2; Tarn 1948, 1.24; Curtius 3.7.1; cf. Murison 1972, 410; McQueen 1967, 29; Atkinson 1980, 170.
- 144 Diodorus 17.32.3; Curtius 3.8.12; Plutarch, *Alex.* 20.6; Arrian 2.11.9–10.
- 145 Diodorus 17.32.4; Curtius 3.8.24; Arrian 2.5.5; Murison 1972, 420; Arrian 3.7.3.
- 146 Murison 1972, 419–23; *contra* Bosworth 1980, 200–1.
- 147 Bosworth 1988, 59.
- 148 Plutarch, *Alex.* 20.3–4.
- 149 Arrian 2.7.1.
- 150 Arrian 2.7.2.
- 151 Devine 1985, 25.
- 152 Arrian 2.6.2.
- 153 Bosworth 1980, 201.
- 154 Polybius 12.17.4–5.
- 155 Devine 1985b, 42; Polybius 12.19.4; 20.1.
- 156 Curtius 3.8.23; Diodorus 17.37.1–2.
- 157 Delbrück 1920, 185, translated into English by Renfrew 1975, 191–209; all future references to Delbrück's work will be to this translation of the text.
- 158 Polybius 12.20.1; Arrian 2.10.3; 2.10.5.
- 159 Devine 1985b, 43.
- 160 Bosworth 1980, 204.
- 161 Arrian 2.7.3–9.
- 162 Discussions of the feasibility of pre-battle speeches: Hansen 1993, 161–180 (against); Pritchett 1994, 27–109 (for); Clark 1995, 375–6 (for); Erhardt 1995,

- 120–1 (for).
- 163 Arrian 2.7.4; cf. Curtius 3.10.6, 9.
- 164 Arrian 2.8.1; Curtius 3.8.22.
- 165 Curtius 3.8.23.
- 166 Arrian 2.8.2; Polybius 12.19.5–6; the account comes from Callisthenes and is the fullest description of the advance; cf. Arrian 2.8.2.
- 167 Polybius 12.19.5–6; cf. Arrian 11.8.2; Curtius 3.9.12.
- 168 Arrian 2.8.4.
- 169 Curtius 3.9.7–8; Arrian 2.8.4.
- 170 Ashley 1998, 225.
- 171 Arrian 2.8.6; Curtius 3.8.1.
- 172 Devine 1985b, 47; Arrian 2.10.1; 2.10.5. The description comes ultimately from Callisthenes, who described the banks as “precipitous and inaccessible”: Polybius 12.17.5.
- 173 Arrian 2.8.6; Curtius 3.9.2; Polybius 12.18.2.
- 174 Arrian 2.8.6; cf. Polybius 12.17.7.
- 175 Curtius 3.9.1–6.
- 176 Arrian 2.8.8, 11; Plutarch, *Alex.* 18.6; Diodorus 17.31.2; Justin 9.9.1; Curtius 3.2.4–9; Bosworth 1980, 209.
- 177 Curtius 3.8.27–28.
- 178 Devine 1985b, 48.
- 179 Curtius 3.8.27–28; cf. Arrian 2.8.5.
- 180 Devine 1985b, 49.
- 181 Delbrück 1920, 204; Ashley 1998, 222–3; Devine 1985b, 49.
- 182 Arrian 2.9.2.
- 183 Arrian 2.9.1; Curtius 3.9.8.
- 184 Arrian 2.9.2–3; Devine 1985b, 50.
- 185 Curtius 3.11.15; Arrian 2.11.4.
- 186 Devine 1985b, 50. Griffith 1935, 32 notes that, at Gaugamela, their line was not continuous; the same may well have been the case here. Arrian 3.12.1; 3.14.6.
- 187 Arrian 3.12.4.
- 188 Arrian 2.9.3; Bosworth 1980, 211; Polybius 12.21.5.
- 189 Curtius 3.9.10–11; 3.11.2; Arrian 2.9.4; Atkinson 1980, 226; Hammond 1981, 104; Devine 1985b, 51.
- 190 Arrian 2.11.2–3.
- 191 Curtius 3.11.1; cf. Diodorus 33.2–3; Devine 1985b, 51.
- 192 Curtius 3.11.1; 2–4.
- 193 Atkinson 1980, 225.
- 194 Arrian 2.6.5; Aeschines 3.164; cf. Atkinson 1980, 226.
- 195 Devine 1985b, 51.
- 196 Devine 1985b, 52.
- 197 Curtius 3.11.14–15; cf. Arrian, *Tact.* 16.3; Aelian, *Tact.* 18.2.
- 198 Arrian 3.13.3; cf. Devine 1975, 383–384.
- 199 Devine 1985b, 52.
- 200 Arrian 2.10.3, 5.

- 201 Xen., *Anab.* 1.8.18; Bosworth 1980, 213.
- 202 Cavalry: Arrian 3.15.1; 3.21.9; 6.6.6. Combination of cavalry and infantry: Arrian 2.4.6; 3.14.2; 3.18.6. Indeterminate: Arrian 4.16.1; 4.16.3. Infantry: Arrian 1.6.7; 4.26.3; 5.16.1; 5.24.2; *Indica* 24.6; 24.7; *Ect.* 29. Diodorus uses *dromōi* three times exclusively of infantry (4.52.4; 14.23.1; 15.55.3) and once indeterminately (18.34.1). Shrimpton 1980, 34 n.16, notes that Herodotus 9.59.1 and Thucydides 1.63.1 use *dromōi* to describe the movement of soldiers wading through water.
- 203 Devine 1983, 201–202.
- 204 Arrian 2.10.3–4; 2.11.4.
- 205 Curtius 3.11.7–8; 3.11.11; Diodorus 17.33.5; 17.34.2–7; Arrian 2.11.4.
- 206 Curtius 3.11.7; cf. Xen., *Anab.* 1.8.26–7.
- 207 Arrian 2.7.8–9.
- 208 Curtius 3.11.4–5; Arrian 2.11.4–5.
- 209 Arrian 2.11.1.
- 210 Arrian 2.11.4; Bosworth 1980, 214; Diodorus 17.34.2–7; Curtius 3.11.7–12; Justin 11.9.9.
- 211 Polybius 12.22.2.
- 212 Arrian 2.11.7; Curtius 3.11.16.
- 213 Diodorus 17.37.2 (18.5 km).
- 214 Diodorus 17.36.6; Curtius 3.11.27; Arrian 2.11.8; Plutarch, *Alex.* 20.10; Justin 11.9.10; Oxyrhynchus Historian, *FGrH* 148 F 44, col. 4.
- 215 Diodorus 17.36.6; Curtius 3.11.27; Justin 11.9.10.
- 216 Arrian 2.11.7; Atkinson 1980, 243.
- 217 Lonsdale 2004, 108.
- 218 Diodorus 17.59.2–8; 60.1–8.
- 219 Plutarch, *Alex.* 33.5.
- 220 Diodorus 17.61.1.
- 221 Devine 1986, 89, argues for a common source. Schachermeyr 1973, 269; Kaerst 1927, 394 n. 1, 165 n. 1, and 338 n. 1; cf. Atkinson 1980, 243–244 and 454–455, for a discussion.
- 222 Devine 1986, 90; Hammond 1980, 138.
- 223 Polyaeus, *Strat.* 4.3.6, 17; Arrian 3.13.1.
- 224 Devine 1986, 91.
- 225 Curtius 4.15.9; 4.15.12; 4.15.13; 4.15.14; 4.15.28; 9.5.21.
- 226 Atkinson 1980, 439–440, 454: favourable to Parmenio. Curtius 4.15.18–22; cf. 4.12.4; 4.15.12. Cf. Atkinson 1980, 61; 400–401; 413; 440–441: hostility to Menidas. Curtius 4.16.2–3 (call for assistance).
- 227 Curtius 4.16.3; cf. Devine 1986, 91 (gnashing of teeth). Curtius 4.12.21; 4.13.1–3 (prone to panic).
- 228 Curtius 4.16.1; 4.16.4; 4.15.2. Devine 1986, 91.
- 229 Curtius 4.12.6–7.
- 230 Curtius 4.12.13. Devine 1986, 92.
- 231 Badian 1958, 148–50; Bosworth 1976, 1–33, being the most important.
- 232 Devine 1986, 93.
- 233 Bosworth 1976, 29–33; cf. Devine 1986, 93.

- 234 Bosworth 1988, 74, 233; Arrian 3.6.1.
- 235 Arrian 3.7.1; Bosworth 1980, 284; Marsden 1964, 11.
- 236 Arrian 3.7.1; Curtius 4.9.7f., 14f.; Diodorus 17.55.1f.
- 237 Arrian 3.7.3.
- 238 Engels 1978, 69; Curtius 4.9.8; Bosworth 1980, 286; Xen., *Anab.* 1.6.1.
- 239 Curtius 4.9.2f.
- 240 Marsden 1964, 12; Xen., *Anab.* 1.6.1; Marsden 1974, 12.
- 241 Arrian 3.7.3.
- 242 Marsden 1964, 14.
- 243 Strabo 2.1.38; Engels 1978, 68ff. Marsden 1964, 22, claims 527km for the same journey. Engels 1987, 70 n. 86 believes that all of Marsden's distance figures are too high, although why this is the case he does not argue.
- 244 Arrian 3.7.3.
- 245 Diodorus 17.55.4.
- 246 Arrian 3.7.6; Bosworth 1980, 287; Plutarch, *Alex.* 31.8.
- 247 For 20 September, see Dinsmoor 1931, 359, 429. For 1 October, see Bosworth 1980, 287.
- 248 Arrian 3.8.7; 6.11.6; cf. Bosworth 1980, 293.
- 249 Curtius 4.9.9–10.
- 250 Arrian 3.9.2–3; Curtius 4.12.18f.
- 251 Arrian 3.8.7; 3.13.2; Curtius 4.9.10.
- 252 Arrian 3.9.1.
- 253 Curtius 4.10.15. Strasburger 1952, 468f., suggests a shorter Macedonian stade than the Olympic stade of 192m.
- 254 Arrian 3.9.3; cf. Bosworth 1980, 294.
- 255 Curtius 4.10.15, 17ff.; 12.19, 24.
- 256 Devine 1986, 96; 1982, 62–63.
- 257 Arrian 3.12.2.
- 258 Diodorus 17.57.3–4; Curtius 4.13.31–32.
- 259 Arrian 3.12.2.
- 260 Devine 1986, 96; Marsden 1964, 48f.; Bosworth 1980, 302.
- 261 Curtius 4.3.31–2. Cf. Burn 1952, 85ff.; Fuller 1958, 167–9.
- 262 Devine 1986, 98.
- 263 Arrian 3.12.5; Berve 1926, 1.178; Tarn 1948, 2.159; Marsden 1964, 24, 27; Bosworth 1980, 303; Devine 1986, 99.
- 264 Plutarch, *Alex.* 15.1; *FGrH* 72 F 29; cf. Arrian 1.11.3. Cf. Bosworth 1980, 303–4.
- 265 Arrian 3.11.3.
- 266 Pearson 1960, 162; Marsden 1964, 44 n. 1; Bosworth 1980, 297; Schachermeyr 1973, 269.
- 267 Curtius 4.12.6–13.
- 268 Diodorus 17.64.3; Curtius 5.1.10.
- 269 Curtius 4.12.6.
- 270 Arrian 3.11.6 and Curtius 4.12.6 both give 1,000 Bactrians at this point. Marsden 1964, 35–6 and Atkinson 1980, 404 identify these Bactrians with the Masagetæ of Curtius 4.12.7.

- 271 Arrian 3.8.6; Bosworth 1980, 292–3.
- 272 Diodorus 17.20.2; Xen., *Cyr.* 1.4.27; Arrian 7.11.1, 6.
- 273 Lane Fox 1973, 229 believes 4,000. Arrian 3.11.5; Curtius 4.12.10.
- 274 Arrian 3.11.5; cf. Curtius 4.12.7, 9.
- 275 Devine 1986, 102. Arrian 1.2.4; Curtius 4.12.6.
- 276 Arrian 3.8.6; Curtius 4.12.13; Plutarch, *Alex.* 31.1; Diodorus 17.53.3; Justin 11.12.5.
- 277 Marsden 1964, 44; Arrian 2.11.2.
- 278 Arrian 3.9.5.
- 279 Bosworth 1980, 297. Xenophon (*Anab.* 3.4.34–5) records that in 401 the Persian army never made camp whilst within 60 stades of the Greeks.
- 280 Diodorus 17.56.1; Plutarch, *Alex.* 32.1; Curtius 4.13.17–25, all also record Alexander oversleeping on the morning of the battle as a result of his studies.
- 281 Marsden 1964, 46; Curtius 4.13.16.
- 282 Marsden 1964, 47.
- 283 Arrian 3.9.5ff.
- 284 Arrian 3.13.1; cf. Marsden 1964, 52.
- 285 Arrian 3.14.6.
- 286 Curtius 4.12.6–7; cf. Devine 1986, 103.
- 287 Arrian 3.13.2; cf. Hamilton 1955, 217–8.
- 288 Arrian 3.13.3.
- 289 Devine 1986, 103; cf. Bosworth 1980, 305; Curtius 4.12.6.
- 290 Marsden 1964, 54.
- 291 Arrian 3.13.4.
- 292 Curtius 4.6.4.
- 293 Burn 1952, 87 n. 6; cf. Griffith 1947, 80–81.
- 294 Arrian 3.14.5; Curtius 4.15.5; Devine 1986, 109 n. 127.
- 295 Burn 1952, 88–90; cf. Bosworth 1980, 308.
- 296 Arrian 3.13.5–6.
- 297 Bosworth 1980, 306 was the first to realize the evident point that the two attacks came simultaneously; cf. Curtius 4.15.14; Diodorus 17.58.2.
- 298 Curtius 4.15.4, 14–15.
- 299 Arrian 3.13.1.
- 300 Devine 1986, 104.
- 301 Arrian 3.14.1.
- 302 Marsden 1964, 55.
- 303 Arrian 3.14.2.
- 304 Curtius 4.15.20–21.
- 305 Arrian 3.14.3.
- 306 Bosworth 1980, 306; Arrian 1.16.1; Homer, *Iliad* 4.282; cf. 6.61–2. There was something of a tradition making such a link: cf. Diodorus 16.3.2; Polybius 18.29.6; Curtius 3.2.13.
- 307 Diodorus 17.60.2–4; Curtius 4.15.24–33; Justin 9.14.3.
- 308 Bosworth 1980, 308.
- 309 Arrian 3.14.3–4.

- 310 Curtius 4.15.32–33.
- 311 Curtius 4.16.1–2.
- 312 Arrian 3.15.1; Curtius 4.16.2; Diodorus 17.60.7; Plutarch, *Alex.* 33.9. This section relies heavily upon Bosworth 1980, 309ff.
- 313 Plutarch, *Alex.* 33.9–11.
- 314 Curtius 4.16.3.
- 315 Curtius 4.16.16–19; Diodorus 17.60.7–8.
- 316 Curtius 4.16.18–19.
- 317 Arrian 3.15.2; Curtius 4.16.20.
- 318 Rhodes 2006, 364.
- 319 Arrian 3.15.6; Diodorus 17.61.3; Curtius 4.16.26.
- 320 Arrian 3.13.2–4; *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 1798.
- 321 Arrian 3.15.6; Diodorus 17.61.3; Curtius 4.16.26; *Oxyrhynchus Papyri* 1798.
- 322 Devine 1986, 108.
- 323 “Pawn sacrifice” is to use Devine's words regarding the same type of action at the Granicus.
- 324 Heckel 2008, 80.
- 325 Bosworth 1988, 87–9; Arrian 3.16.6.
- 326 Arrian 3.16.9; Diodorus 17.64.5; Curtius 5.1.43; cf. Bosworth 1974, 53–64.
- 327 Curtius 5.2.17.
- 328 Diodorus 17.67.4–5; cf. Curtius 5.3.4–15.
- 329 Curtius 5.3.17.
- 330 Arrian 3.18.3; Diodorus 17.68.2–3; Curtius 5.3.17–23.
- 331 Arrian 3.18.4; Diodorus 17.68.5; Curtius 5.4.4–14; Plutarch, *Alex.* 37.1; Polyaeus 4.3.27; cf. Bosworth 1980, 326.
- 332 For the Bolsoru Pass, see Bosworth 1980, 326; Curtius 5.2.18.
- 333 Curtius 5.4.17, 22–3; Arrian 3.18.4–6.
- 334 Heckel, 2008, 82.
- 335 Arrian 3.19.3.
- 336 Arrian 3.24.1.
- 337 Holt 1989, 12; Hamilton 1971, 106–111; Bosworth 1980, 373–374.
- 338 Curtius 6.6.21; Arrian 3.25.6.
- 339 Curtius 6.6.25–32; Diodorus 17.78.3.
- 340 Arrian 3.28.2; Diodorus 17.78.2–4; Curtius 7.3.2.
- 341 Ashley 1998, 289; Curtius 7.4.30.
- 342 Curtius 7.3.18; cf. Hamilton 1969, 98–99; Bosworth 1988, 105; Engels 1978, 93–5.
- 343 Arrian 3.28.8 claims 7,000; Curtius 7.4.20 claims 8,000.
- 344 Diodorus 17.83.7–8; Curtius 7.4.18–19.
- 345 Arrian 3.28.10; Curtius 7.4.20.
- 346 Curtius 7.6.1–9; Arrian 3.30.10.
- 347 Curtius 7.6.14–15; Arrian 4.2.1: only small numbers of Bactrians were drawn into the war. Bosworth 1981, 17, notes that Bactria also rose up against Alexander; *contra* Holt 1989, 52ff.
- 348 Arrian 4.1.5.

- 349 Holt 1989, 54.
- 350 Following Holt 1989, 52ff.
- 351 Bosworth 1981, 29ff.
- 352 Ashley 1989, 292.
- 353 English 2010.
- 354 Curtius 7.1.7–9; *contra* Arrian 4.15.1–6, who places these diplomatic missions in Bactra in early 328.
- 355 Arrian 4.17.4–7; Curtius 7.3.1–16; *Metz Epitome* 20–3; cf. Berve 1926, 2.718; Bosworth 1988, 116.
- 356 Plutarch, *Alex.* 51.8; Curtius 8.1.48–51; Bosworth 1981, 36.
- 357 Arrian 7.6.1; Plutarch, *Alex.* 71.1; Diodorus 17.108.1–3; Curtius 7.5.1.
- 358 Curtius 7.4.1.
- 359 Lane Fox 1973, 334.
- 360 Heckel 2008, 112, argues that it is wrong to speak of a Macedonian conquest of India, believing that many were brought on board through diplomacy, “restoring the authority of the empire over the eastern satrapies and establishing a buffer zone”.
- 361 Diodorus 17.86.4; Curtius 8.12.5.
- 362 Herodotus 4.44; Ashley 1998, 306.
- 363 Bosworth 1988, 119; Arrian 4.22.7.
- 364 Arrian 4.23.4–5; Curtius 8.10.6.
- 365 Arrian 4.24.7; cf. Bosworth 1988, 121.
- 366 Caroe 1962, 51–3; Eggermont 1970, 66.
- 367 Curtius 8.10.24.
- 368 Arrian 4.26.4; Curtius 8.10.27; *Metz Epitome* 40; English 2010.
- 369 Arrian 4.26.1–2.
- 370 Curtius 8.12.1; cf. Diodorus 17.82.2, who calls the man Aphrices.
- 371 Hamilton 1956, 26.
- 372 For example: Bosworth 1995, 262ff.; Lane Fox 1973, 351ff.; Devine 1987, 94–6; Hamilton 1956, 26.
- 373 Arrian 5.14.3 = Aristobulus. Arrian 5.14.5–6; 5.15.1 = Ptolemy. Arrian 5.14.4 = others.
- 374 Devine 1987, 94. Orders such as those to Craterus 5.11.4, Meleager, Attalus and Gorgias 5.12.1, the *pezhetairoi* 5.14.1, Tauron 5.14.1, Coenus 5.16.3, Seleucus, Antigenes and Tauron 5.16.3.
- 375 Curtius 8.13.13–17; 8.14.4, 19; 8.14.7–8.
- 376 Devine 1987, 94.
- 377 Plutarch, *Alex.* 60.1; 60.11 = letters. 60.6–7; 61.1 = Onesicritus. 60.3 = Sotion (whose source in turn was Potamon of Mytilene (Devine 1987, 94)); 60.12–13; 61.1 = “most writers”.
- 378 Diodorus 17.87.5.
- 379 Frontinus, *Strat.* 1.4.9; Curtius 8.13.23 also implies this but does not say it directly; Arrian 5.11.1–2.
- 380 Curtius 8.13.17; Arrian 5.13.2. In fact Arrian says both islands were of significant dimensions (the one that was seen and that which was unseen, presumably behind the first); Bosworth 1995, 281.

- 381 Plutarch, *Alex.* 60.3–7; Curtius 8.13.17–27; Arrian 5.13.2.
- 382 Devine 1987, 96; Pliny, *NH* 6.21.62; Strabo 15.1.32.
- 383 Stein 1932, 31–46; Devine 1987, 96; Stein 1937, 1–36.
- 384 Diodorus 17.87.3.
- 385 Arrian 5.9.1.
- 386 Arrian 5.11.1; Heckel 2008, 116.
- 387 Arrian 5.9.1; Curtius 8.13.5.
- 388 Arrian 5.18.1.
- 389 Arrian 5.12.2; 5.13.4; 5.16.3.
- 390 Fuller 1958, 187.
- 391 Engels 1978, 153–4.
- 392 Arrian 5.12.3–4; Curtius 14.23–4; Plutarch, *Alex.* 60.3–4.
- 393 Arrian 5.13.2; cf. Sidnell 2006, on warhorses.
- 394 Bosworth 1995, 281.
- 395 Curtius 8.14.1; Diodorus 17.87.2.
- 396 Arrian 5.13.2.
- 397 Bosworth 1988, 128; 1995, 283.
- 398 Devine 1987, 99–100; Fuller 1958, 191.
- 399 Arrian 5.14.3f.
- 400 Arrian 5.14.3; Plutarch, *Alex.* 60.8; Arrian 5.14.4. It is Arrian's figures that Lonsdale 2007, 88, chooses to believe. Curtius 8.14.2.
- 401 Devine 1987, 100.
- 402 Arrian 5.15.5–7; Diodorus 17.87.4–5; Curtius 8.14.9–13; Polyaeus, *Strat.* 4.3.22.
- 403 Devine 1987, 101; Diodorus 17.87.2; Curtius 8.13.6.
- 404 Polyaeus, *Strat.* 4.3.22, notes 50 feet apart.
- 405 Polybius 12.20–2; Hamilton 1956, 27.
- 406 Van Wees 2004, 168–9 fig. 16, for a visual representation of hoplites in a formation.
- 407 *Contra* Van Wees 2004, 185–6, who argues classical hoplites fought with a relatively low density formation and occupied gaps of 1.8m.
- 408 Diodorus 17.87.2; Arrian 5.15.4; Curtius 8.13.6.
- 409 Devine 1987, 101; Heckel 2008, 116ff., omits them entirely from his account of the battle.
- 410 Arrian 5.16.1.
- 411 Devine 1987, 101.
- 412 Arrian 5.16.3; Curtius 8.14.15; Plutarch, *Alex.* 60.10.
- 413 1st & 2nd interpretation: Tarn 1948, 2.196 n.1. The 2nd was originally suggested by Bauer in 1898. 3rd interpretation: Devine 1986, 103.
- 414 Bosworth 1995, 294–5.
- 415 Anspach 1903, 54.
- 416 Arrian 4.17.3.
- 417 Devine 1986, 102–5; Hamilton 1956, 27ff.
- 418 Bosworth 1995, 295; Plutarch, *Alex.* 60.11; Curtius 8.14.15.
- 419 *Contra* Bosworth 1995, 295; cf. Fuller 1958, 197; Green 1974, 397.

- 420 Hamilton 1956, 27–8; Tarn 1948, 2.196; Devine 1987, 110–11 ; *contra* Bauer 1899, 105–128. Devine 1987, 110–11, for statistics on how frequently this is the case.
- 421 Hamilton 1956, 29.
- 422 Devine 1987, 104; Heckel 2008, 115ff.; Bosworth 1995, 296.
- 423 Cf. Devine 1987, 104ff.; *contra*, Heckel 2008, 115ff.
- 424 Arrian 5.16.3; Curtius 8.14.15; Bosworth 1995, 297.
- 425 Arrian 5.13.4. Devine 1987, 105, suggested Tauron commanded the archers and *possibly* the light armed as a whole.
- 426 Arrian, *Indica* 18.6; Bosworth 1995, 294–8; Heckel 1992, 99.
- 427 Bosworth 1995, 299.
- 428 Arrian 5.16.4; cf. 3.14.6, for similar language.
- 429 Polyaeus, *Strat.* 4.3.22; Arrian 5.17.2.
- 430 Arrian 5.17.2.
- 431 Diodorus 17.88.1; Curtius 8.14.17; Plutarch, *Alex.* 70.10–11. Bosworth 1995, 300; cf. Diodorus 17.88.1; Curtius 8.14.17; Plutarch, *Alex.* 70.10–11.
- 432 Arrian 5.17.3; Curtius 8.14.18.
- 433 Curtius 8.14.23–7; Arrian 5.17.3–4; cf. Bosworth 1995, 300.
- 434 Arrian 5.17.5.
- 435 Arrian 5.18.1.
- 436 Bosworth 1995, 301.
- 437 Arrian 5.18.3; Diodorus 17.89.3; Devine 1987, 108.

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Index

- Abatis [89](#), [103](#)
- Abisares, King of Kashmir [185](#), [190](#), [194](#), [197](#)
- Abu Dhahir [119](#)
- Abydos [33](#), [50](#)
- Achaemenid Empire [71](#), [158](#), [177](#)
- Achilles [33](#)
- Adana (town) [77](#)
- Adana Island [183](#), [185](#)
- Aelian [5](#), [222](#)
- Aesopus [34](#), [218](#)
- Aetolia & Aetolians [32](#)
- Afghanistan (see Bactria)
- Agamemnon [33](#)
- Agathon [43](#), [53](#), [124](#)
- Agema [73](#), [123](#), [187](#), [190–1](#), [200](#)
- Agesilaus [50](#)
- Agis III [160](#), [163](#).
- Agrianians [24](#), [30](#), [38](#), [43](#), [46](#), [54](#), [64–5](#), [73](#), [85](#), [87–8](#), [93–4](#), [98–100](#), [113](#), [124–5](#), [137](#), [139](#), [140](#), [165](#), [187](#), [206](#).
- Albanians [127–8](#).
- Alcetas [179](#), [186](#).
- Aleian Plain [73](#)
- Aleppo [76](#)
- Alexander Mosaic [40](#), [101](#).
- Alexandria-Eschate [170](#)
- Alexander's Letters [181–2](#)
- Alexandria(s) [5](#), [116](#), [168](#), [170](#).
- Amanid Gates [77](#), [220](#).
- Amanus Mountains [71](#), [76–7](#), [83](#), [88–9](#), [91](#)
- Amphipolis [22](#), [27](#), [30](#)
- Amphoterus [67](#)
- Amu Darya (see Oxus River)
- Amyntas [41](#), [43](#), [45–6](#), [54](#), [63](#), [78](#), [87](#), [123](#), [165](#), [173](#)
- Anaximenes [2](#), [125](#)
- Anaxippus [165](#)
- Anchialus [73](#)

Ancyra [70](#)
Andromachus [124](#)
Antigenes [199](#), [203–4](#), [227](#)
Antigonus [66](#), [220](#)
Antioch [76](#), [93](#)
Antiochus [93](#)
Antipater [32](#), [67](#), [160](#), [163](#), [173](#), [204](#)
Aornus Rock [179](#)
Arachosia [168](#)
Arachosian Cavalry [127](#), [138](#), [166](#), [186](#)
Aral Sea [135](#), [165](#)
Arbela [119–21](#), [126](#)
Arbupales [49](#)
Arcadia & Arcadians [32](#)
Archers [24](#), [27](#), [38](#), [43](#), [46](#), [54](#), [64–5](#), [73](#), [85–6](#), [88](#), [90–1](#), [93–4](#), [98–100](#), [124–5](#), [128](#), [139](#), [162](#), [164–5](#), [172](#), [180](#), [187](#), [204](#), [217](#), [229](#)
Areia [165–6](#)
Aretes [125](#), [134](#), [138–9](#), [142](#)
Aretis [47](#)
Ariobarzanes [161–3](#)
Arisbe [33](#)
Aristander [112](#)
Aristobulus [2](#), [3](#), [6–9](#), [16](#), [49](#), [56](#), [113](#), [125–6](#), [180–2](#), [191–2](#), [216–218](#), [220](#), [227](#)
Aristomedes [90](#)
Ariston [93](#), [123](#), [125](#), [134](#)
Armenian Cavalry [128](#)
Armenian Mountains [116](#)
Arrabaeus [41](#)
Arrian [1](#), [3](#), [7–12](#), [16](#), [18–19](#), [22–5](#), [27–9](#), [31](#), [34](#), [36](#), [38–49](#), [52–7](#), [61](#), [63–4](#), [66](#), [68–9](#), [75–6](#), [78–9](#), [82–6](#), [89–90](#), [92–95](#), [98](#), [100–2](#), [110–16](#), [118–29](#), [132](#), [134–8](#), [141–6](#), [161–5](#), [169](#), [171](#), [173](#), [178–84](#), [186–7](#), [189–91](#), [194–6](#), [198–204](#), [206–9](#), [216–29](#)
Arsamenes (or Arsames) [39](#)
Arsames – see Arsamenes
Arsites [39](#), [49–51](#), [219](#)
Artabazus [50](#), [68](#), [168](#), [171](#)
Artacoana [165–6](#)
Artaxerxes II [49–50](#), [100](#), [165](#)
Artes [112](#)
Asander [63](#)
Asia Minor [4](#), [30](#), [33](#), [51](#), [53](#), [61](#), [66–7](#), [116](#)
Aspasia & Aspasiens [178](#)

Assacanus, King of the Assacenians [178](#)
Assacenians [178](#)
Assyria & Assyrians [76](#), [135](#)
Asthetairoi [186–7](#)
Athenaeus [6](#)
Athens & Athenians [19](#), [32](#), [66](#), [78](#), [95](#), [163](#), [197](#)
Atizyes [40](#)
Atropates [127](#)
Attalus [93](#), [124–5](#), [179](#), [188](#), [227](#)
Attines [171](#)
Augustus [2](#)
Autariatae [22](#), [30](#)
Autophradates [68](#)
Babylon [74](#), [78](#), [117–19](#), [128](#), [158](#), [160](#), [204](#)
Bactra [165](#), [169](#), [171](#), [174](#), [177](#), [226](#)
Bactria [161](#), [165–75](#), [226](#)
Bactrian Cavalry [39](#), [97](#), [126–30](#), [133–4](#), [146](#), [169](#), [187–8](#), [191](#), [199–200](#), [224](#), [226](#)
Baghdad [76](#)
Bahce Pass [71](#), [76](#)
Bajaur [177–8](#)
Balacrus [94](#), [137](#)
Balkh (see Bactra)
Bazira [179](#)
Begram [168](#)
Beilan Pass [71](#), [74](#), [76–7](#), [82](#)
Bessus [97](#), [113](#), [127](#), [131](#), [134–6](#), [138–42](#), [165–6](#), [168–9](#)
Biga River [35](#)
Black Sea [21](#), [172](#)
Bolsoru Pass [162](#), [226](#)
Bottiaea [27](#)
Boumelus [114](#), [120](#)
Brahmins [7](#)
Brison [124](#)
Cadusian Cavalry [127](#)
Calas [43](#), [61](#)
Callisthenes [2–6](#), [11–12](#), [16](#), [56](#), [83–4](#), [89–90](#), [94](#), [101](#), [111–13](#), [115](#), [125](#), [221](#)
Caltrops [112](#)
Cape Sigeium [33](#)
Cappadocia & Cappadocians [49](#), [71](#), [128](#)
Cappadocian Cavalry [128](#)

Cardaces 89–90, 99–100
Caria & Carians 66, 128
Caspian Gates 164
Catanes 168–9
Cataphracts 93, 97, 135
Catapult(s) 16–17, 30
Celaenae 65
Celts 19
Ceyhan 77
Chalcis 69
Chares 2
Charidemus 32, 78
Chios 67
Cicero 5
Cilicia 39, 71, 73–6, 78–81, 83–4
Cilician Gates 73, 83–84
Circumvallation 17
Cleander 125, 134
Cleitarchus 2, 5–7, 112
Cleitus son of Bardylis 30
Cleitus the Black 40, 48, 123, 125, 172, 175
Cleitus the Taxiarch 177, 204
Coele Syria 127
Coeranus 124
Colonae 34
Companion Cavalry 27–8, 39, 41, 43–4, 46, 48, 53–6, 73, 82, 87, 92–4, 99–101, 123, 125, 130–3, 135–42, 146–7, 165, 171, 175, 177, 186–7, 190–1, 199, 201, 203, 205–7
Cophen River Valley 177
Cos 67
Cossaei Cavalry 126
Craterus 43, 57, 87, 113, 123, 139, 162–3, 165–6, 174, 178, 186–7, 194, 199, 203–4, 208, 227
Cretan Archers 88, 93, 124
Cunaxa 91, 98, 100, 117–19
Curtius 1, 5–7, 12, 16–17, 19, 39, 49, 66–7, 74–5, 77–9, 82–3, 85–6, 89–90, 93–97, 99–102, 111–14, 116–17, 120–24, 126–7, 129, 131, 134–37, 139–40, 142–4, 146, 161–2, 168, 175, 177, 178, 180–3, 192, 194–6, 198–9, 201, 203, 206–7, 216–17, 220–9
Cyndus River 73
Cyrus 100, 117, 169–70
Cythnus 69
Cyzicus 34, 218

Dahae Horse-Archers [127](#), [138](#), [187](#), [200](#), [205](#), [207](#), [210](#)
Damascus [77](#), [79–80](#)
Danube [8](#), [21](#), [25–6](#), [28–30](#), [218](#)
Darius [12](#), [18](#), [23](#), [47](#), [49](#), [51–2](#), [67–8](#), [70](#), [73–92](#), [94–6](#), [99–102](#), [110–14](#), [116–22](#), [125–31](#), [133–145](#), [147](#), [160](#), [164–5](#), [168](#), [173](#), [177](#), [219](#), [220](#)
Darius I [178](#)
Dascyleum [61](#)
Datames [69](#)
Dataphernes [168–9](#), [172](#)
Deli Cay [84](#)
Delium [17](#)
Demaratus [47](#)
Demetrius (the historian) [5](#)
Demetrius the Besieger [66](#)
Demetrius the Ilarch/ Hipparch [123](#), [125](#), [179](#), [187](#), [198](#), [200](#)
Demosthenes [2](#), [32](#), [95](#), [216](#).
Diodorus [1](#), [6–7](#), [11–12](#), [14](#), [19](#), [36](#), [38–40](#), [42–3](#), [48–9](#), [52–3](#), [55–6](#), [68](#), [73](#), [78–9](#), [83](#), [90](#), [102](#), [110–11](#), [116–17](#), [120](#), [123](#), [129](#), [141](#), [144](#), [146](#), [160](#), [175](#), [182–3](#), [194–6](#), [209](#), [216–229](#)
Ecbatana [158](#), [164](#)
Ecbolima [179](#)
Egypt [67](#), [110](#), [115–17](#)
Elea & Eleans [32](#)
Elephants [7](#), [129](#), [180–82](#), [187](#), [194–9](#), [201–4](#), [206–7](#), [209](#)
Ephemerides [3](#), [216](#)
Ephesus [63](#)
Ephialtes [32](#)
Ephippus [3](#)
epitetaḡmenoi [128](#)
Eratosthenes [8](#)
Erices [180](#)
Erigyius [123](#), [125](#)
Euboea [69](#)
Eumenes [3](#)
Euphrates [78](#), [116–18](#), [216](#), [218](#)
Euripus [69](#)
Frontinus [182](#), [227](#)
Galatia [70](#)
Gandhara [177](#)
Gates of Asia [34–35](#)
Gaugamela [2](#), [9](#), [11](#), [13–15](#), [18](#), [23](#), [40](#), [44](#), [65](#), [77](#), [80](#), [88](#), [91](#), [93–4](#), [97–8](#), [100](#), [101](#), [110](#), [112–16](#), [118–23](#), [125–6](#), [129](#), [143](#), [146](#), [148–59](#), [164](#), [175](#), [177](#), [181](#), [196](#), [198](#), [205](#), [208](#), [210](#),

216–18, 222
Gavur Dag 76
Gaza 16–17, 110
Gedrosia & Gedrosians 166
Getae 28–31
Glaucias the Ilarch 123, 125
Glaucius, King of the Taulantians 30
Gordium & Gordium Knot 66, 70, 75
Gorgias 177, 188, 227
Gortuae Cavalry 126
Granicus River & Battle 10, 11, 14–15, 18, 27, 33–9, 44, 49, 51, 58–61, 63, 66, 82, 88, 93, 97–9, 129, 131, 134, 141, 147, 168, 184, 205, 209, 218, 226
Great Zab River 121
Greece & Greeks 12, 19–21, 31, 32, 44–5, 50, 55, 61, 66, 85, 95, 126, 131, 160, 163, 170–72, 175, 224
Halicarnassus 11, 32, 45, 49, 61, 63–4, 67
Halkiwani Nullah 183
Hamadan (see Ecbatana)
Hasanbayli Pass 71
Hattin 118
Hegelochus 41, 69, 123, 125
Hellespont 32–3, 39, 42, 67–8, 125, 218
Hephaestion 2, 116, 171, 175, 177, 187, 198, 200
Heracleides 27, 123, 125, 217
Hermotus 34
Herodotus 6, 177, 222, 227
Hindu Kush 165, 177
Hissar Range 171
Homer 33, 40, 141, 225
Hoplites 25, 29, 89–90, 140, 195, 208, 228
Horse-archers 27, 187, 190, 192, 200, 205, 207, 210, 217
Hydaspes 8, 13, 52, 53, 93, 99, 114–15, 129, 143, 180–4, 186, 188, 192–3, 200, 204, 208–9, 211–15
Hypaspists 10, 23–4, 27–8, 38, 41, 43, 45–6, 139, 147, 164, 187, 204, 209
Hyrcania 164
Hyrcanian Cavalry 39, 90, 99, 127–8
Illyria & Illyrians 21–2, 85, 123, 217
India 3, 5–7, 13, 128, 136, 165, 168, 172–7, 179–80, 183, 185–6, 188, 190–2, 194–209, 227
Indian Chariots 181, 191–2, 194–6, 209
Indus River 7, 177, 180, 184
Ionia 39, 51

Iskanderun 71, 84
Issus 4, 10, 26, 40, 43, 51, 61, 69–72, 74–7, 79, 81–4, 88, 91, 97–8, 103–10, 113–14, 118, 123, 127, 129, 130–1, 133–4, 146–7, 184, 220
Jacoby 5
Jalalpur 183
Jaxartes River 169–70
Jebel Maqlub 121
Jhelum River 183
Justin 1–2, 6, 39, 49, 90, 102, 129, 218–19, 222–5
Kabul Valley 168, 177.
Kahbul River Valley (see Cophen River Valley)
Kalekoy Pass 71, 75–7, 81
Kandar Kas Nullah 183
Kara Kapu Pass 71, 81.
Katgala Pass 178
Kemer Kay 34
Khawak Pass 168
Koçabas Cay 34
Lampsacus 33
Langarus 30
League of Corinth 21, 66, 93–4
Leonnatus 199, 203–4
Lesbos 67
Lycaonia 71
Lycia 64, 68
Lycus River 114, 120–1, 144
Lydia 39, 49
Lyginus River 25–Jun
Madates 160
Magarsus 73
Magnesia 63
Malakwal 183
Mallus 74–5, 77, 79
Mangal Dev 183
Manqube 121
Maracanda 169, 171–2
Marathon 197
Mardia 164
Mardian Archers 128
Massaga 178–9

Massagetae [127](#), [133](#)
Mazaeus [112](#), [113](#), [116–19](#), [122](#), [127](#), [130](#), [133](#), [135](#), [138](#), [143](#), [145](#), [158](#)
Media [164](#)
Median Cavalry [39](#), [85](#), [99](#), [127](#)
Megasthenes [8](#)
Meleager [43](#), [53](#), [87](#), [113](#), [123](#), [125](#), [162](#), [177](#), [188](#), [227](#)
Melophoroi [128](#)
Memnon [39](#), [44–5](#), [48](#), [50](#), [51](#), [54](#), [67–9](#), [74](#)
Memphis [115](#)
Menidas [97](#), [113](#), [125](#), [133–4](#), [147](#), [223](#)
Mercenaries [9](#), [25](#), [34–5](#), [39](#), [41](#), [43–5](#), [48–50](#), [53–6](#), [63–4](#), [66](#), [68–9](#), [78](#), [88–90](#), [93–4](#), [97](#), [100](#), [102–3](#), [123–5](#), [128](#), [133–5](#), [147](#), [171](#), [177–9](#), [187–8](#), [208](#), [219](#)
Merkes Su Pass [71](#)
Mesopotamia [116–17](#), [127](#)
Metz Epitome [6](#), [227](#)
Miletus [61](#), [63](#), [216](#), [218](#)
Misis Dag [76](#)
Mithridates [47](#), [49](#), [219](#)
Mithrines [61](#), [63](#)
Mitylene [67–9](#)
Moesia [21](#)
Mount Haemus [22](#), [25](#), [31](#)
Mount Orbelus [22](#)
Mount Ossa [21](#)
Myriandrus [75–7](#), [80](#), [82–4](#)
Nabarzanes [90](#), [97](#), [164](#)
Nautaca [172–3](#)
Nearchus [2–3](#), [5](#), [8–9](#), [219](#)
Nicanor [43](#), [87](#), [99](#), [123](#)
Nile River [115](#)
Niphates [39](#), [49](#)
Odryssian Cavalry [53](#), [93–4](#), [124](#), [174](#)
Omares [49](#)
Onesicritus [2](#), [5](#), [181](#), [227](#)
Ora [179](#)
Orontes River [80](#)
Oxux River [165](#), [168](#), [171–2](#)
Oxyartes [180](#)
Oxyrhynchus Historian [102](#), [146](#), [223](#), [226](#)
Paonia & Paonians [43](#), [45](#), [54](#), [85](#), [87](#), [93–4](#), [97–100](#), [125](#), [135](#)

Paesus River [34](#)
Pamirs Mountains [165](#)
Pamphylia [64](#), [71](#)
Panegorus [34](#)
Paphlagonian Cavalry [39](#)
Parapamisadae [168](#), [177](#)
Parion [34](#)
Parmenio [10–13](#), [15](#), [30](#), [33](#), [39](#), [42–3](#), [52–7](#), [61](#), [63](#), [71](#), [73–4](#), [76](#), [79](#), [80](#), [82](#), [87–8](#), [95](#), [97](#), [101](#), [112–13](#), [115](#), [123](#), [125](#), [130–1](#), [136–8](#), [143–5](#), [160](#), [166](#), [175](#), [201](#), [223](#)
Parthia [164](#)
Parthian Horse-Archers [127](#)
Pasargadae [158](#), [163](#)
Paskōhak Massif [162](#)
Pausanias (Assassin of Philip II) [19](#)
Pawn Sacrifice [27](#), [134](#), [147](#), [226](#)
Payas River [84](#)
Peace of Antalcidas [68–9](#)
Pella [22](#)
Pellium 30–Jan
Peloponnese [69](#), [158](#)
Peloponnesian War [184](#)
Pelta [208](#)
Peltasts [89–90](#)
Percote [33](#)
Perdiccas [43](#), [87](#), [99](#), [123](#), [171](#), [175](#), [177](#), [186–7](#), [198–200](#)
Pericles [184](#)
Persepolis [158](#), [163–4](#), [216](#), [218](#)
Persia & Persians [7](#), [11–15](#), [18](#), [21](#), [30–6](#), [38](#), [39](#), [41–56](#), [61](#), [63](#), [69](#), [70](#), [73–5](#), [77–80](#), [82](#), [85–6](#), [91–2](#), [94–98](#), [100–101](#), [103](#), [110–12](#), [114](#), [117–19](#), [121–2](#), [124](#), [126](#), [129–35](#), [138–47](#), [158–65](#), [168](#), [177](#), [184](#), [224](#)
Persian Cavalry [39–40](#), [43–5](#), [47–9](#), [51](#), [53](#), [55–6](#), [92–3](#), [95–9](#), [113](#), [116](#), [125–7](#), [129](#), [133](#), [135–6](#), [138–9](#), [145](#), [147](#)
Persian Chariots [18](#), [23](#), [110](#), [117](#), [121](#), [127–30](#), [133–4](#), [136–9](#), [147](#)
Persian Empire [19](#), [78](#), [130](#), [158](#), [170](#), [177](#)
Persian Gates [163](#)
Persian Gulf [128](#), [219](#)
Persian Infantry [45](#), [55](#), [94](#), [99](#), [102](#), [128](#), [147](#), [161](#), [224](#)
Persian Missile Troops [46](#), [55](#), [98–9](#)
Persian Navy [61](#), [64](#), [67](#), [69](#), [73](#), [81](#), [110](#)
Persian Order of Battle/Dispositions [10](#), [13](#), [39](#), [55](#), [87–90](#), [117](#), [125–6](#), [129–31](#), [147](#)
Persian Troop Numbers & Casualties [8](#), [39](#), [41](#), [43](#), [49](#), [90](#), [102](#), [116](#), [126–29](#), [131](#), [135](#), [138](#),

146–7, 161, 218

Persian Wars 21

Petines 39, 49

Peuce Island 25–6, 30–1

Pezhetairoi 4, 10, 89–90, 99–100, 102–3, 113, 123, 139–41, 165, 174–5, 186–8, 191, 197, 204, 208, 227

Phalanx 4, 29, 41, 53, 90, 113, 129, 136–7, 140, 216

Pharnabazus 68–9

Pharnuces 40, 49

Philip (Taxiarch) 43, 53, 57

Philip (Thessalian Cavalry) 123, 125

Philip II, Alexander's Father 7, 19–21, 26, 30, 50–1, 139

Philip the Acarnanian (physician) 73

Philippi 22

Philippopolis 22

Philippus (Simmias) 123

Philotas 10, 27, 31, 43, 63, 73, 123, 125, 166, 175

Phoenicia & Phoenicians 69, 74

Phrataphernes 164

Phrygia 39, 49, 65, 126

Phrygian Cavalry 126

Pillar of Jonah 71, 74, 76, 82–3, 86, 88

Pinarus River 75, 77, 81, 83–4, 86–7, 89, 91–2, 96–7, 100, 127

Pisidia 64–5

Plataea 17

Pliny 183, 227

Plutarch 1, 4, 6, 11–12, 16–17, 34–5, 42, 49, 120, 129, 141, 143, 181–3, 192, 195–6, 199, 201, 216–21, 223–9

Polyaenus 55, 111–12, 194, 223, 226, 228–9

Polybius 1, 4, 40, 83, 86, 216, 218–23, 225, 228

Polyperchon 123, 139, 186

Pompeius Trogus 1, 2.

Porus 180–92, 194–9, 201–2, 204–6, 208–10

Practius River 33–4

Pretesilaus 33

Priapus 34, 218

Prodromoi 43, 45, 54, 87, 93–4, 97–100, 125, 134–5, 175

Proteas 69

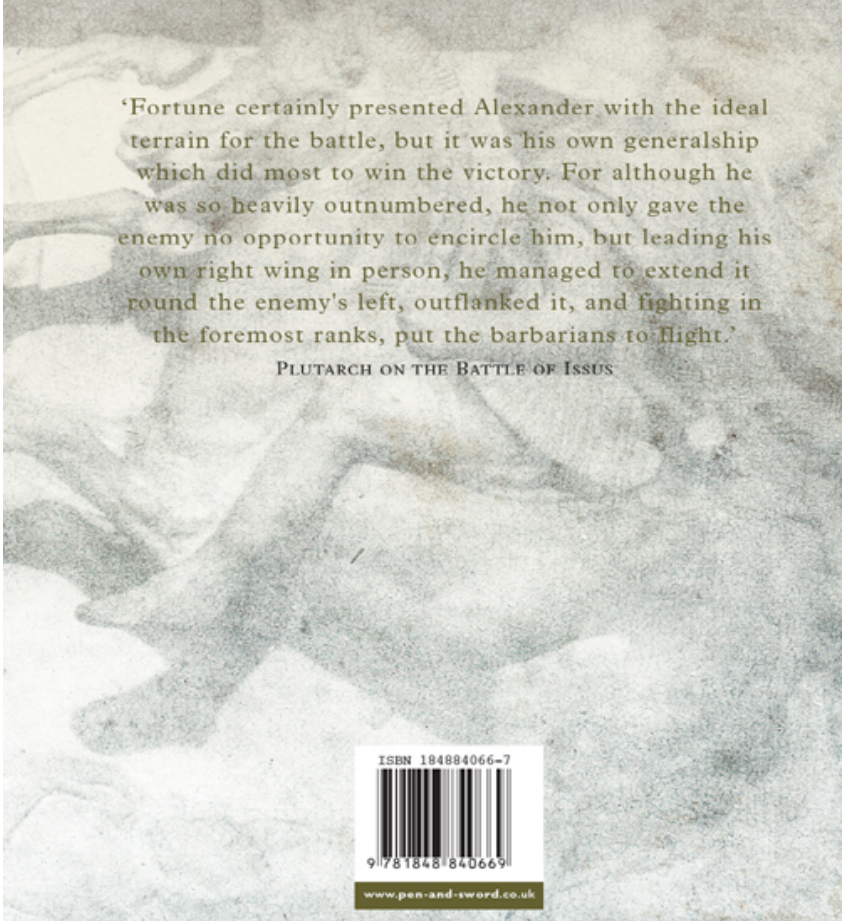
Ptolemy 2, 6–9, 11–16, 19, 45, 49, 52, 54, 56–7, 66, 85, 87, 95, 112, 114–15, 125, 163, 171, 175, 180–3, 192, 198, 200, 203, 216–17, 219–20, 227

Pyramus River 73

Pythodelus [19](#)
Rheomithres [39](#)
Rhosaces [40](#)
Rock of Ariamazes [171](#)
Rough Cilicia [73](#), [80](#)
Sabictas [70](#)
Saca Horse-archers [127](#), [172](#), [190](#), [192](#)
Sacecinian Cavalry [127](#)
Sagalassus [64–5](#)
Saladin [118](#)
Salpinx [163](#)
Samara [115](#)
Sambus [6–7](#)
Sardis [61](#), [63](#)
Sarissa [25](#), [27](#), [29](#), [92](#), [128](#), [137](#), [139](#), [141](#), [175](#), [208](#)
Satibarzanes [165–6](#)
Scorched Earth [44](#), [50](#), [117–18](#), [168](#), [171](#)
Scythian Cavalry [97](#), [127](#), [129](#), [130](#), [133–6](#), [187–8](#)
Scythian Horse-Archers [172](#)
Scythians [139](#), [170–1](#)
Sea of Marmara [34](#)
Seleucus [87](#), [203–4](#), [227](#)
Sestus [33](#)
Shibar Pass [168](#)
Shipka Pass [22–3](#), [217](#)
Siege Tower(s) [16–17](#)
Sigrum [67](#)
Sinai Peninsula [115](#)
Siphnos [69](#)
Sisicottus [175](#)
Sisigambis [112](#)
Sisimithres [172](#), [174](#)
Sitaceniens [128](#)
Sitalces [93](#), [124](#)
Siwah [4](#)
Skirmishers [90](#), [94](#), [206–7](#)
Slaves [6–7](#), [85](#), [170](#)
Slingers [27](#), [90](#), [180](#)
Sochi [69](#), [74–9](#), [81–3](#)
Socrates [41](#), [43](#), [45–6](#), [54–6](#)

Sogdian Rock [171](#)
Sogdiana [161](#), [165](#), [167](#), [169](#), [170–1](#), [173](#), [175](#), [177–8](#), [200](#)
Soli [73](#), [79–80](#)
Sopolis [27](#), [123](#), [125](#), [217](#)
Sotion [181](#), [227](#)
Sparta & Spartans [17](#), [160](#), [163](#), [184](#), [197](#)
Spitamenes [168–72](#), [200](#)
Spithridates – see
Spithrobates Spithrobates (or Spithridates [39–40](#))
Stathmoi [3](#)
Strabo [1](#), [3–5](#), [19](#), [34](#), [183](#), [216–18](#), [223](#), [227](#)
Susa [3](#), [74](#), [117](#), [158](#), [160](#)
Susian Cavalry [126–7](#)
Susian Gates [161](#)
Susiana [160](#)
Swat [177–8](#)
Syria [75](#), [127](#)
Syrian Gates [76](#)
Syrmus [25–6](#), [28](#), [30](#)
Tadzhikistan [171](#)
Tapurian Cavalry [127–8](#), [164](#)
Tarsus [73–5](#)
Tauron [199](#), [203–4](#), [227](#), [229](#)
Taurus Mountains [71](#)
Taxila [175](#), [180](#), [183](#), [188](#)
Taxis & Taxeis [10](#), [43](#), [45–6](#), [53–5](#), [73](#), [86–7](#), [99–100](#), [103](#), [113](#), [123](#), [139](#), [165](#), [174](#), [177](#), [186–8](#), [191](#), [199–200](#), [204](#), [209](#)
Tell Gomel [120](#), [121](#)
Tenedos [69](#)
Termessus [64](#)
Thapsacus [116](#), [118–19](#)
Thebes [30–2](#), [217](#)
Thermopylae [21](#), [163](#)
Thessaly & Thessalians [12](#), [19](#), [21](#), [39](#), [41](#), [43](#), [53](#), [55](#), [57](#), [87](#), [88](#), [90](#), [92–7](#), [103](#), [110–11](#), [123](#), [125](#), [130](#), [132–3](#), [138](#), [143](#), [191](#), [202](#)
Thrace & Thracians [22–5](#), [28](#), [32](#), [43](#), [65](#), [85](#), [93](#), [123–4](#), [158](#), [173](#), [206](#)
Thucydides [17](#), [217](#), [212](#)
Thymondas [68](#), [78](#), [88](#), [90](#)
Tigris [116–17](#), [119–20](#)
Timagenes [112](#)

Toprakkale Pass [77](#)
Tralles [63](#)
Triballi & Triballians [21](#), [25–31](#), [129](#), [173](#)
Tripoli [69](#)
Tiremes [32–3](#), [63](#)
Trojan Pass [22–Mar](#)
Trojan War [33](#)
Troy [33](#)
Turkestan [165](#)
Tyre [110](#), [115–17](#), [173](#)
Uxians [128](#), [163](#)
Uxii & Uxians [128](#), [160](#), [163](#)
Vale of Tempe [19](#), [21](#)
Vulgate [6–7](#), [9](#), [101](#), [141](#), [146](#), [161](#), [166](#), [182](#), [190](#), [206](#)
Xenippa [172](#)
Xenophon [33](#), [75](#), [84](#), [98](#), [118](#), [224](#)
Xerxes [21](#)
Zadracarta [165](#)
Zagros Mountains [160](#)
Zarangia [166](#)
Zariaspa [171](#)
Zelea [34](#), [50](#), [61](#)
Zeus [4](#), [63](#)



‘Fortune certainly presented Alexander with the ideal terrain for the battle, but it was his own generalship which did most to win the victory. For although he was so heavily outnumbered, he not only gave the enemy no opportunity to encircle him, but leading his own right wing in person, he managed to extend it round the enemy’s left, outflanked it, and fighting in the foremost ranks, put the barbarians to flight.’

PLUTARCH ON THE BATTLE OF ISSUS

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